

## PILLARS OF WISDOM

### Studies in Sophiology

Who hath searched out the Wisdom of God that goeth before all things?

Ecclesiasticus 1:3

Who can fathom the *Mâyâ* of the Most High – except He Himself?

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Few figures in the Biblical mythos are as mysterious and have given rise to such an abundance of speculations as that of ‘Wisdom’ (*Sophia*, *Chokmah*), which appears not only in the aptly called Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, but, as could be argued, reaches back even to the very ‘beginning’; for many exegetes have seen already in the very first words of Scripture (“*in principio*”, Gen 1:1) an allusion to this enigmatic Wisdom, that was “even before the world began” (Prov. 8:23).

Thus for example St. Thomas Aquinas tells us (*S.Th.* I.46.3) that “in the beginning”, could also be read as “in the Son”, meaning: “in Wisdom”<sup>1</sup>, according to the Psalm: “Thou hast made all things in Wisdom” (103:24) as well as the Pauline saying that “in Him all things were made” (1. Col. 1:16).

Aquinas, echoing the consensus of the Holy Fathers (already the

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<sup>1</sup> An interpretation that is also common in Jewish esoterism, for in Kabbala the very first emanation of the superessential nothingness of *Ein Sof* (or *Keter*) is indeed *Chockmah* (wisdom), according to the verse: “Wisdom comes into being from Nothing (*ayin*)” (Job 28:12); a fact already indicated by the first words of the Torah (*B’resheet* = “in the beginning”). As the *Bahir* (§3) tell us: “The word ‘beginning’ (*resheet*) is nothing other than Wisdom; it is thus written (Ps. 111:10): ‘The beginning is Wisdom, the fear of God’” (an exegesis that it is also taken up often in the *Zohar*, cf. I.7b, I.11). Likewise Pico della Mirandola: “*Beresheet* – that is, in the beginning he created – is the same as if it had said, He created in Wisdom” (*Conclusiones* XXVIII.5). And finally Isaac the Blind: “The letter *beth* is the highest *Keter*, and it is therefore written larger than all other *beths*. However the word *B’resheet* is in fact *Chockmah*. In truth, then, two sefirot are encompassed in this word” (*Process of Emanation*). Thus *be-resheet* has always been seen as spiritually equivalent to *be-chokhmah*.

Apostle calls Christ “the Wisdom of the Father”; cf. 1. Cor. 1:24; 2:7), thus identifies the figure of Wisdom with the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, the Word “by whom all things were made” (Joh. 1:3).

Now, the patristic interpretation is certainly prudent (especially in a period where Arianism was rampant), for sophianic speculations have not seldom lead to introducing a “fourth hypostasis” into the Trinity, or, as in the case of the (*soi-disants*) “gnostics” and their myth of the “fallen Sophia”, have served as the basis for sprawling speculative systems, populated by syzygies, demiurges and innumerable archons and aeons, which stray far from orthodox doctrine. Nevertheless, we can’t help but wonder if there isn’t more to this mystery, a suspicion that is certainly not without basis in Scripture.

Thus Salomon (the supreme mystagogue of Sophia) tells us that Wisdom was *created*<sup>2</sup> by God in the beginning of His way (Prov. 8:22, cf. also Sir. 1:4), which can obviously not be applied to the co-eternal Son, the Divine Logos who “was with God and *was* God” (Joh. 1:1) from time everlasting. Furthermore he clearly seems to conceive of Wisdom as female, calling her his “sister” (Prov. 7:4), his “bride” even (Wis. 8:2), so that some translations even speak to us of “Lady Wisdom”.

Now, all of these points have of course long been addressed; thus some tell us that the passage in question can also be rendered as “possessed” instead of “created” and others are quick to point out that the “Lady Wisdom”, the celestial Virgin Sophia, we encounter in the Salomonic texts is merely a poetic image; after all, wisdom (like justice etc.) is of the female genus in most languages (*sophia*, *sapientia*, *la sagesse*, *die Weisheit*, etc.) and thus allegorically represented as such.

However, all these objections haven’t stopped many from delving deeper into the sophianic mystery, the greatest among them being without a doubt Jakob Böhme.

## I. The Theosophia of Jakob Böhme

As is well known, Böhme starts his ‘theogonic’ vision with the *Ungrund*, the divine ‘Abyss’, which is the *mysterium magnum* in which all things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, are eternally contained (analogous to the ‘One’ of the *platonici* or the *Ein Sof* of the Kabbalists).

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<sup>2</sup> Arians (as well as Anti-Arians) explicitly referred this passage to the second Person, leading not seldom to a heretical subordinationism.

In this divine Abyss there is from all eternity a bottomless, unoriginated Will, which is the beginningless beginning of all. This (as of yet ‘subjectless’) Will is as unfathomable as the groundless *Ungrund* itself and any attempts to investigate it “would merely produce confusions in our mind”, as Böhme warns us (*De Incarn.* XXI.1). Blindly stirring in the luminous darkness of the *Ungrund*, it conceives within itself the desire for its own self-revelation (“it willeth to be something, that it might manifest itself to itself”, *Mys. Mag.* I.2) and “this love or desire conceived by the Will or Father within itself is the Son” (*ibid.*), the primordial Centre or ‘Subjectivity’ (*Gemüth*), the ‘Heart’ and *Grund* (‘ground’ or ‘foundation’) of the Father, in whom the whole *pleroma* of the *Ungrund* is gathered into one undifferentiated whole, the ‘Concept’ or ‘Comprehension’ (*Fassung*), in which the abyssal and incomprehensible Will ‘grasps’ (*fassen*) or ‘grounds’ (*begründen*) itself into a comprehensible, ‘byssal Will. In this *Begründung* the abyssal *Ungrund* ‘grounds itself’ in the *Grund* or ‘Byss’, marking the passage from Non-being to Being.

However the Will is yet ‘blind’; we might compare it to a ‘gaze’<sup>3</sup>, staring out into an undefined Infinity, meeting no ‘object’. Thus it goes out again from the Centre and “fashions a mirror for itself”, in which to behold itself and its eternal wonders. This mirror is not to be understood as ‘created’ in the literal sense, but could more accurately be considered the ‘feminine’ (passive or ‘mirroring’) aspect of the eternal *Ungrund* itself, its receptivity (or ‘reflectivity’). It is the ‘Mirror of Wisdom’ or the ‘Eye of Eternity’ in which the whole abyssal *pleroma* has stood from time everlasting.

Wisdom is the true Divine Chaos, wherein all things lie, viz., a Divine *Imagination*, in which the Ideas of angels and souls have been seen from Eternity in a divine type and resemblance, yet not then as creatures, but in resemblance, as when a man beholdeth his face in a glass (*Clavis*, V).

Although eternal, her infinite treasures had yet been hidden as if under an more-than-luminous ‘glare’ (*Glast*) only to be ‘opened’ or ‘revealed’ (*eröffnet*) by the ‘imagination’ of the ‘Will-spirit’ emanating from the divine ‘Subjectivity-Centre’ (*Gemüth*), in which she now appears as its ‘Object’. Indeed, since there is no subjectivity without object, it could be

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<sup>3</sup> We find here striking similarities with the doctrine of Plotinus, who also talks about a ‘searching gaze’ (*atypotos opsis*), or a yet ‘indeterminate gaze’ (*opsis oupo idousia*), emanating from the ineffable One, which then ‘finds itself’ (*fassen*) in the *Nous* (as a ‘thinking’ or ‘seeing’ of the noetic *pleroma*); cf. *Enneads* V.2.1, 3.11; VI.7.15, etc.

said that the mirror is ‘fashioned’ by the very act of mirroring (or ‘imagining’<sup>4</sup>), or that “the Will by seeing itself, thereby creates within itself a mirror” (*Vera Psych.* I.13). The one reveals the other and vice versa, so that we dare even say that the Son gives birth to His Mother (“*figlia del tuo figlio*”), just as He has been born (or ‘revealed’) by her (*Pater in filio, filio in matre*), for it is by entering into the ‘virginal matrix’ of Divine Wisdom that the paternal Will conceives or ‘finds’ Himself (*finden & erfinden*) as the Son and it is from (the Father and) the Son that proceeds the Spirit by whom the Mirror of Wisdom is ‘revealed’ as the ‘Objectivity’, ‘Visibility’, or ‘Contemplation’ (*Beschaulichkeit*) of the Godhead. In it the Spirit ‘plays’ with the powers diffused from the Son and makes ‘formings’ therein as an image (*Fürmodelung*) or ‘projection’ (*Gegenwurf*) of the whole Trinity in which the three ‘Persons’<sup>5</sup> eternally behold and ‘discover’ themselves and find to their self-understanding (*Verstand*). Here Wisdom (the *Idea*) appears as a

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<sup>4</sup> The word for “imagination” that Böhme uses is “*Einbildung*”, which corresponds roughly to the Latin *informare*: to give form, to make images (*Bilder*), to fashion, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Of course the question in how far one can even speak of ‘Persons’ here (at least in the orthodox sense of the term) is debatable, for some have argued that the ‘immanent Trinity’ of Böhme is really monohypostatic in nature (“not a Trinity of Persons but a Person in Trinity”, as Koyré puts it), this ‘hypostasis’ being eternally born in the threefold process of generation: “Here (in the still mystery of the *Ungrund*), there is no reason to say that God is three Persons, but He is Trinitarian in His eternal generation. He births Himself in Trinity, and yet there is only one simple Being and one generation, rightly understood; neither Father, nor Son, nor Spirit, but the one eternal Life or Goodness” (*Mys. Mag.* VII.11).

“*Gott ist keine Person als nur in Christo*”, says Böhme. However we have to keep in mind that Böhme had no theological training and thus wasn’t familiar with the *terminus technicus* of ‘Person’ (or ‘Hypostasis’) as understood in the theological tradition (namely as ‘subsistent relation’). If Böhme had been aware that what is meant by ‘Father’ is not so much an individual ‘substance’ (gr. *hypostasis*) but rather the ‘Relation of Paternity’ eternally deployed in the One Essence, he might’ve been less critical about assigning ‘Personhood’ to the “threefold Spirit (or Will)” of the abyssal Godhead. We thus have to agree with the judgment of Fr. Malachi Martin (whose orthodoxy cannot be reproached) when he says that “Böhme can call Christ a person, but neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, because in speaking of the three divine ‘persons’ we must (dogmatically) define ‘person’ as a relation, not at all anthropomorphic ... The only reason we human believers can address God is through Christ and in Christ, because He is the perfect anthropomorph through whom and in whom we can know, praise and adore the bodiless Father and Spirit”, it is only through Christ that we can say “Our Father” (*In Quest of Catholicity*, VII).

‘maiden’ or ‘virgin’ (*Jungfrau*), “who stands, in the dawn of eternity, before the God who gives Himself up to Self-manifestation, and who, so to speak, allures Him to manifest Himself, by showing Him the exceeding riches of His glory”.

The Maiden stands before God as if in a vision, a morning-dream of Eternity, which prophetically reveals to Him what He can become, what He can make Himself (Martensen, *Jacob Boehme*, I.1).

Thus in the ‘still joy’ (*stille Lust*) of the Eternal Freedom (viz. indeterminacy), the Godhead contemplates itself “as when a man beholdeth his face in glass” and this divine Face reflected back to Him in the morning-dawn of eternity is what Baader calls the “the Ternary in *Ein-Sof*” or the “esoteric God” and what Böhme refers to as the “clear Deity” (*die klare Gottheit*) or JEHOVA.

This Deity is like “an eternal band, which cannot perish and which generates itself from eternity to eternity, and the first therein is always the last, and the last the first” (*Tribus Prin.* VII.14), i.e. the band which binds “the eternal Will in its aspect as Father” to the Son, “the eternal Will in its aspect as divine Love, the Centre or Heart of the Father ... by means of the Spirit, the power issuing from the Will and the Love” (*Mys. Magn.* I.2.4).

This band is the beginning and end of all things, the ‘string’ on which the whole symphony of the divine Life is performed and the thread from which is woven the fabric of universal existence. We might also conceive of it as an ellipsis or as a triangle (“the archetype of all existent things”, according to the *Zohar*) inscribed into the infinite sphere of the ‘Eye of Eternity’, in which the ‘Will-Spirit’ emanating from the Father goes forth into the Son (the centre of the sphere as well as the apex of the triangle), from which it proceeds again (“*ex Patre per Filium*”) as an ‘out-breathing’ or expiration (the Holy Spirit properly so called) of Father and Son, flowing towards the terminal point (or the ‘product’) of this *processio*, i.e. the Mirror of Wisdom (which Böhme also calls the ‘fourth effect’)<sup>6</sup> as the communal ‘utterance’ or ‘emission’ of the Three, the

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<sup>6</sup> The Ternary is thus always also a Quaternary – “*quand on est à trois, on est à quatre*”; a pattern which is also found quite frequently in Scripture for those with the ‘eyes to see’. *In toto* we can identify three ‘causal agents’ or ‘actors’ (*Wirker*) and three ‘effects’ or ‘operations’ (*Wirkungen*) in the Godhead: “The one single Will of the Abyss divides itself with the first eternal unbeginning Comprehension (*Fassung*) into a threefold Operation, while yet remaining but one indivisible Will ... The first abyssal Will is called the eternal Father and the comprehended, conceived Will is His only-begotten Son. The *exitus* of the

‘expired’ or ‘outspoken Word’ (*logos ekthetos*) .

It is the *outspoken*, which the Father speaketh forth out of the Center of the Heart with or by the Holy Spirit, and standeth in the divine Formings and Images, in the Sight of the Eye of the Holy Trinity of God; yet as a Virgin without generating (*Sex puncta*, I.26).

This elliptical movement of procession (Father – Son) and return (Son – Sophia), *proôdos – epistrophé*, is the very ‘heartbeat’ of the abyssal Deity, the ‘respiration’ of the One, and all that ever was, is, and will be is but a variation on this simple theme, for, as we shall see, the whole process of the eternal Birth, in love and in strife, in discord and harmony, unfolds but in numerous instantiations of this same pattern.

However, in the Eternal Freedom of the tranquil Deity this harmonious movement doesn’t yet give off any ‘sound’, but here everything is yet plunged into the silence of the One, for “where all is the Self, what should one hear and through what, and what should one speak and to whom?” (*Brih. Upan.* II.4.14).

“If there is to be a light, there must be a fire” (*Mys.* XL.2), says Böhme and “all things exist in Yes and No”, but in the abyssal Freedom there is only the ‘Yes’ of the still joy. Thus the *Idea* appears here as spirit without ‘body’ (*Leib*) or substantial ‘corporeity’ (*Wesen*)<sup>7</sup> and as such it

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abyssal Will through the conceived Son is the Hl. Spirit ... and the fourth operation is the divine Visibility (*Beschaulichkeit*) or Wisdom, in which the Spirit plays with the expired powers as with one single power” (cf. *De Electione*, I). Thus the uncaused (*agennetos*) Father ‘causes’ the Son as His ‘revelation’ (*Enthülltheit*) and together they ‘cause’ the Spirit (as the second ‘effect’ and third ‘actor’), Wisdom being the collective ‘projection’ or ‘image’ (*Ebenbild*) of the whole Ternary. Since she does not ‘act’ herself but is a pure passive mirror in which the Spirit moves “like the soul in the body” (*Clav.* V.18) we already see how she is in no way conceived as ‘personal’ or a ‘fourth Hypostasis’.

<sup>7</sup> The word *Wesen*, which plays a huge role in the terminology of Böhme, is almost impossible to translate; like the Greek *ousia* (which is its closest equivalent) it can be rendered as both substance, essence, and nature, but also as ‘corporeity’ or even ‘being’ as such. Put simply we could perhaps say that the *Wesen* is that wherein a thing (or spirit) *west*, i.e. wherein it “moves, and lives and has its being”. When Böhme commonly refers to the Godhead as *das Wesen aller Wesen* (“the Being of all beings”), this is not to be understood in the scholastic sense of an abstract ‘pure Being’ (*ipsum esse*), but rather as a moving, pulsating Life, a dynamism (as well as the *locum omnium*, the centre and circumference of all that is). Lastly we should remember that, even though the theogonic process is one of ever greater ‘substantialisation’, so that Böhme

is a mere 'spectre' or 'phantom'. We might liken it to the mere 'thought' of a fire, which is not yet 'burning' or fully 'expressing' itself externally by manifesting heat and light, for it finds no 'resistance' on which to spark off its flame.

"The One breathed, windless, by its own will / Other than that there was nothing" (*Rg-Veda*, X.129). Yet the 'clear Deity' does not merely passively contemplate or 'admire'<sup>8</sup> itself, but actively 'imagines' (forms images) into the Mirror and the more it imagines the more its desire grows, for "where all powers are but one power, they yearn for their understanding, and understanding originates in differentiation and multiplicity" (*Quaes. Theos.* III.4).

Thus there is a desirous 'grasping' for its manifestation, a continual emanating of 'volitional movements' or 'sensors' (which Böhme also, analogously, calls 'senses') which flow out from the divine 'Subjectivity-Centre' (*Gemüth*)<sup>9</sup> in an desire to 'taste', 'feel', and 'hear' themselves by fashioning 'sense-objects'.

The sensuous emanation from the *Gemüth* makes it desirous, that it may introduce the senses into something, as a centre or subjectivity (*Ichheit*), wherein it may act with the senses, and reveal and behold itself through this acting (*Theosopia*, 1.18).

The senses imagine into vague thoughts and the thoughts beget other thoughts, making centre from centre, evolving (i.e. 'expanding') into a primordial blueprint (or 'possibility') of multiplicity; and with growing

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speaks of different levels of *Wesenheit* throughout (the primordial *Wesen* being the Son as the 'Heart' of the Father), the true 'Body' of God only ever appears at the very end of the eternal Birth (i.e. in the 7. Quality).

<sup>8</sup> *Spiegel*, *speculum*, mirror, *mirare*, *admiratio*, *miraculum*, *Wunder* (miracle), *bewundern* (to admire) etc. Pride (*Hochmut*, *Hoffart*) which is identified by Baader as the sin of Lucifer is thus 'self-admiration' in the most literal sense.

<sup>9</sup> Another word that, in its old signification, is almost impossible to accurately render in English is that of *Gemüth*. It could be translated simply as 'mind', or even 'mood', 'feeling', or 'consciousness' (for the *Gemüth*, being the seat of subjectivity, could be said to be always a 'consciousness of something' and therefore presupposes an object); however its meaning goes further than that, for it isn't simply 'mind' (lat. *mens*, skr. *manas*) in the narrow sense but the very 'centre' of a being (thus approaching it to the notion of the 'heart' as understood in traditional metaphysics). As such we also have to remember that, when we speak in the following of many different 'wills' or 'spirits' etc., all these are but emanations of the one *Gemüth* and thus ultimately rooted in it as their primordial Centre (similar to how opposing wills can arise in our subjectivity without however actually splitting it apart).

desire the thoughts become ‘compacted’ into ever more concrete images and impressions.

The whole of the divine Being is in a state of continual and eternal generation comparable to the mind (*Gemüth*) of a man, but immutable. There are continually thoughts born from the mind of man, and from them arises desire and will. From desire and will originates action, and the hands do their work, so as to render it substantial. Thus it is with the eternal evolution (*Tribus Prin.* IX.35).

Through its desirous imaginations, the Divine Mind, rapt in the contemplation of its possibilities, becomes seduced by the beautiful Maiden until it finally becomes fully dominated by its desire and the ‘eternal Nature’ in God is aroused (which is not to be understood as in any way ‘material’ but, as Baader says, more of a “spirituous potency”), which posits itself as a *contrarium* to the Freedom.

We might say that a dialectical reversal has taken place, for was it previously the *Gemüth* (as the divine Subjectivity) which had ‘fashioned’ the Mirror (as its intentional Object) by its joyous ‘speculations’, it is now the divine Will which becomes ‘subjected’ to its own imaginings; it is overpowered and ‘obscured’ by its own desire, which draws it in as by a ‘magnetic pull’, whereby it becomes ‘contracted’ or ‘coagulated’ into the ‘harsh matrix’, which marks the first Quality of eternal Nature.<sup>10</sup>

The first Quality is the Desire (*Begierde*) which is comparable to magnetic attraction. The Will conceives of itself as something. By this act of impressing or contracting it overshadows itself and causes itself to become darkness (*Clavis*, VIII.38).

There are thus two opposite ‘wills’ (which are really only one, but bifurcated into two ‘principles’ or *centra*), the ‘Nature-will’ of the

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<sup>10</sup> An interesting analogy to this process is found in the descent of the *tattvas* in Kashmir Shaivism: The first principle with which Absolute Reality (*Ungrund*, *Paramashiva*) clothes itself is *Shiva-tattva*, the pure and unrestricted “I” (the Father); the second is *Shakti-tattva* (“I am”) corresponding to the ‘grounding’ of the Father in the Son and the beginning of a first Subjectivity. In the third *tattva* (*Sadākhyā*) the Godhead reflects upon itself in the Mirror of Consciousness (Sophia) and realizes: “*Aham idam*”, “I am this”. Here there is a clear dominance of the Subject (*Aham*) and the Object is yet more or less ‘obscured’ (“*per speculum in aenigmate*”). But in the following *Ishvara-tattva* a change of balance occurs; the Object starts obscuring the Subject and thus it is called “*Idam Aham*”, “This I am”, which is then followed by the descent into outwards manifestation (*Mâyā-tattva*) shortly after.



*centrum naturae* (which is a selfish contraction and a darkness; the eternal *No*) and the ‘Spirit-will’ (the eternal *Yes*; expansive and out-flowing, a yearning for the eternal Freedom), which become entangled in a hostile struggle. And thus we see how the ‘still joy’ (*Lust*) of contemplation has become the ‘cunning’ (*List*) of the Will by which it makes itself its own prisoner and sets the Nature-wheel of the eternal Birth into motion, “for there must be opposition; the will desires not to be dark, and this very desire causes the darkness” (*Vera Psych.* I.23).

This wheel has seven ‘spires’, the seven Qualities<sup>11</sup> of eternal Nature, which Böhme also links to the ‘seven spirits’ of the Apocalypse (Rev. 1:4), with each containing and generating all the other like ‘wheels within wheels’ (and what the *Sefer Yetzira* says about the sefirot is likewise true for Böhme’s seven Qualities, namely that “their beginning is in their end and their end is in their beginning, like a flame in burning coal”).

Do not imagine these seven spirits to be standing one by the side of the other, comparable to the stars, which are seen side by side in the sky; they are all seven like only one spirit ... All the seven spirits of God are born one in another. One gives birth to the other; there is neither first nor last. The last generates the first, as well as the first the second, the third the fourth, up to the last. They are all seven equally eternal (*Aurora*, X.40, 2).

The ‘coagulation’ of the harsh, desirous Nature (what Böhme also calls the ‘dark Impression’ or *Fiat*) is counter-acted by the Spirit-will which longs to escape from the darkness back into the light of Freedom, thus giving rise to the ‘bitter sting’ (the second Quality), which manifests as a centrifugal ‘flight’ and a violent ‘pulling’ which starts to ‘break up’ the egoic contraction (‘self-centering’) of the compacted ‘Harshness’ (*Herbigkeit*).

Entering into a fierce struggle (a veritable ‘tug-o-war’), the

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<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that for Böhme the word ‘Quality’ (*Qualität*) does not merely designate an ‘attribute’, but a moving, surging, pulsating force (*quellen, quallen, wallen*), a ‘source’ or ‘spring’ (*Quelle*) as well as a *Qual*, ‘sensation’ (hence their connection with different ‘tastes’), or even – more literally – ‘pain’, ‘torment’ (for the qualities are only “*quallos*” once they’re gathered in mutual harmony). As such some have rendered the word *Qualität* (as understood by Böhme) as ‘divine expressiveness’ or as a ‘driving power’ of God’s self-manifestation. And this also conforms with the Kabbalistic notion of the ‘sefirot’ which literally means “enumerations” or “attributes” but which is mystically understood as precisely this ‘expressivity’: “Why are they called sefirot? Because it is written (Ps. 19:2): The heavens declare (*ha-safirim*) the glory of God” (*Bahir* §125).

‘contractive’ and ‘tractive’ *dynameis* become entangled in an agonizing rotation (the 3. Quality), i.e. the ‘anguish wheel’ (*Angstrad*), in which each only starts cleaving more strongly to its own desire, thereby amplifying their opposite tendencies.

The sting strives upwards and the Nature-will strives downwards, for the harshness indraws and makes itself heavy so that the one strives to rise upwards, and the other to sink downwards, while neither of them can accomplish its object, and thus eternal Nature becomes like a revolving wheel (*De Incarn.* II.4).

We see here already how the second Quality originates in the first (and the third from the two preceding two), for the centrifugal movement out of Nature which characterizes the ‘sting’ is already prefigured in the attractive (centripetal) movement into Nature (the magnetic pull) which gave rise to the hardening of the dark *Fiat* in the first place and wherein the initial Yes (the original yearning for manifestation) suddenly ‘flips’ into the harsh *No*. The desirous Nature-will (or “Salt”) originates in the Father (*proôdos*) and the ‘retractive’ bitterness (or “Mercury”) in the Son (*epistrophê*), which are then propelled into motion by the ‘anguish-wheel’ of the third Quality (the “Sulphur”) rooted in the Spirit (and thus we see how the ‘eternal band’ is already manifesting in the dark ternary of the first Principle, albeit in a quite ‘dissonant’ manner)<sup>12 13</sup>.

Further we see once more how motion or ‘expansion’ (the ‘pull’, i.e. *Ziehen*) is the principle of understanding or *Scientia* (hence why Böhme also speaks of the *Scienz*); for just like the movement of the Hl. Spirit in

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<sup>12</sup> For this first natural manifestation of the ‘eternal band’, which Böhme also refers to it as the ‘worm’ (*Wurm*), Baader has coined the fitting term “*Dreiuneinigkeit*” (‘Tri-disunity’).

<sup>13</sup> “In Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt are contained all things”, says Böhme (cf. *Clavis*, IX). However “this refers not so much to the material as to the spiritual aspect of things, namely, to the spirit of the qualities wherefrom material things grow”. Salt is the “sharp metallic desire in nature”, i.e. the principle of compaction (*coagula*) and consequently that which makes ‘substantiality’ or ‘corporeity’ (*Wesen*). Mercury is “the motion and differentiation of the former, by means of which each thing becomes objective and enters into formation”, i.e. the principle of movement and separation or ‘dissolution’ (*solve*), and finally Sulphur, “which signifies the anguish of nature”, is the principle of the conjunction of both, i.e. of all burning and boiling (or of ‘heat’), both as the benefic warmth of divine Love, i.e. as *Sul*, the “lubet of Liberty”, which “is the Oil of Nature, wherein Life burns, and every thing grows” (*De Sign.* II.16), and as *Phur*, the infernal burning of the ‘wrath fire’ (from which we also see that the first and second Principle are literally ‘one Word’).

the ‘still mystery’ opened up the divine understanding (*Verstand*), so is the ‘anxious’ struggle (*Ring*) of the harsh and bitter Quality the first awakening of the ‘sensuous life’ (as a ‘disgust’ and ‘sharpness’) as well as the principle of differentiation; for in the ‘repulsiveness’ and adversity of the primordial polarity, a first multiplicity of ‘essences’ (*Essentien*) is generated in the ‘dark matrix’, so that here it is truly “Strife that is the father of all things” (Heraclitus).

Böhme also describes this process as a series of ‘cross-births’ (*Kreuzgeburten*), wherein the tension between the two poles of the principal ‘axis’ – the (centripetal/descending) harshness and the (centrifugal/ascending) bitter-sting originating in the *centrum naturae* – ‘explodes’ into an horizontal evolution, generating new ‘crosses’ on each end which unfold in an indefinite expansion, like the trunk of tree (or a *lightning*)<sup>14</sup> fanning out into innumerable branches.

Each form (*Gestalt*) or birth takes its own form, virtue, working and springing up from all the others; and the whole birth now retains chiefly but these four forms in its generating or bringing forth; viz. the rising up and the falling down, and then, through the turning of the Wheel in the harsh essence, the putting forth on this side, and on that side, on both sides like a cross; or, as I may so say, the going forth from the point (or centre) towards the East, the West, the North and the South (*Tribus Prin.* II.13).

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<sup>14</sup> Owing to the circular, atemporal nature of the process, we could likewise say that the ‘cross-births’ are ‘sparked’ by the fiery Lightning of the fourth (and ‘central’) Quality itself, which is (as we shall see) really the ‘principal’ Quality of all. For the horizontal ‘explosion’ appears precisely when the ‘pushing’ and ‘pulling’ of the first two Qualities has reached its maximum points (which also coincides with the ‘unloading’ of the Lightning): “If the center cannot get upwards nor downwards, and yet drives with its desiring, then it drives forth sideways, and the whole form or figure of it is as a growing tree; for it appears in the center like a cross, out of which the essences of the desiring spring forth, like a tree or sprout (as I may so say) and yet is not a sprout, but like a driving forth in itself, like a kindling in the dead essentiality” (*Trip. Vita*, IV.16).

We might thus say that the ‘cross-births’ are generated not so much in the anguish wheel per se, but rather in the infernal ‘boiling’ of the struck down matrix (i.e. in ‘anguish-made-substantial’), all the while remembering that, although on the one hand the spinning ‘cross’ of the anguish-wheel originates (like everything else) only the Lightning in the first place, on the other hand the vertical axis of harshness (lower pole) and bitterness (upper pole) is already present ‘before’ this ‘discharging’ (the ‘tension’ of both being precisely what ‘sparks off’ the fiery Lightning) and is then merely ‘transformed’ by the Flash into the sinking movement of the Light- or Water-spirit and the ascending movement of the Fire-spirit respectively (see below).

We might also use the image of giant, irrational clockwork, which “turns as a wheel and always breaks up the harsh contraction, bringing a plurality into the essences with the sting” (*Sex puncta*, I.18) and in which all gears are spinning in a universal discord, unendingly fulgurating new fractal copies of themselves. Nowadays we are even tempted to use the analogy of an algorithm generating an indefinite plurality of individual ‘codes’ (the essences) from the basic duality of 1’s and 0’s.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the frenzy of this ever-turning ‘wheel of Ixion’ reaches its culminating point in the fourth Quality, wherein the maddening tension of the two is discharged in a great, fiery ‘Lightning’ (*Blitz*), the frightful *Schrack* (‘shock’ or ‘flash’), which is “comparable to a spark produced by the friction of flint and steel”<sup>16</sup> (*Clavis*, IX.49), and which strikes down the hardness of the ‘dark matrix’. “Sinking down as a slain being (*Wesen*)”, the matrix becomes “thin and soft” and, fatally struck by the ‘fire-shock’ which makes “makes the darkness substantial (*materialisch*)”, it is dissolved (or ‘melted’) into a ‘sharp Water-spirit’ (or *Mercurius*)<sup>17</sup> wherein the ‘Fire-spirit’ takes root as its foundation or ‘fuel’, the dark, material ‘coal’ on which it feeds.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Phillip K. Dick famously described Böhme’s God as “binary, fractal, self-replicating algorithm”. However we have to remember that these ‘cross-births’ are replicated in all seven Qualities and while it would thus seem that the analogy starts breaking down after we enter the light ternary, we have to keep in mind that the second ternary is but a repetition of the first one and that the first and second Quality too are but manifestation of the twofold movement of the ‘eternal band’ as the primordial 1 and 0 of all.

<sup>16</sup> Using again a modern image, we might also compare it to the ‘spark’ which springs from the meeting of two opposed poles (+ and -, i.e. the eternal Yes and No) and which is then immediately ‘sublimated’ (*aufgehoben*) into the bright and tranquil flow of energy, i.e. the Light-spirit.

<sup>17</sup> This *Mercurius* (referring to the planet of the same name) is distinct from the elemental ‘Mercury’ we encountered before, although, as all alchemy teaches, metals and planets obviously have their correspondence (the Mercury of the fourth Quality acting, like that of the second, as a ‘solvent’, the ‘water of separation’ or ‘*Scheidewasser*’ dividing the first and second Principle).

<sup>18</sup> Especially in the fourth Quality it is important to keep in mind that all individual ‘moments’ of the Theogony are absolutely eternal and unfold, as it were, ‘at once’. Thus it could just as well be said that the ‘fire-lightning’ causes the shattering or ‘dissolving’ of the harsh matrix, as that it only originates in the combustion of the (dissolved) matrix in the first place. Similarly the will-less surrendering of the Light-spirit (as the principle of ‘meekness’) and the ‘death’ of the Desire-will are but one and the same ‘consubstantial’ moment where the one posits the other and vice versa. When we speak here of ‘death’, ‘transformation’, ‘devouring’ etc. it should also always be remembered that no

Here originates the most primitive Body/Spirit duality (*Wesen* and *Geist*, which is likewise that of Female and Male, Body/Soul, Nature/Spirit, 1. and 2. Quality etc. and which are of course ultimately all but manifestations of the *exitus-reditus* of the ‘eternal band’), and as such it is also the Lightning that “maketh *Life*” (“*im Blitze urständet das Leben*”). Because for Böhme (and here he once more agrees with the Vedic sages) the life-force (*prâna*, which is also linked to Agni) in all things is a ‘heat’ or fire, such that he even calls the soul (*psyche* as vital power) a ‘fire-worm’ (“the worm that dieth not”; Heraclitus’ “ever-living fire”) that stirs in the gloomy depths of all living beings. For all life is a devouring fire that hungers for its ‘nourishment’ (*Nahrung*) so as to keep the life-spark on burning.

Already the Nothing has eternally “hungered for Something” (a primordial hunger also vividly described in the *Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad*)<sup>19</sup> and now, with the enkindling of the Fire-spirit, this hunger is given its first substantial (or ‘corporeal’) food, namely the ‘corps’ of the desirous matrix (what Böhme now also calls the ‘watery matrix’). And here we also see how all life is born out of death, for it is from this ‘darkness-become-substantial’ that the light-life of the Deity ‘sprouts forth’ (*ausgrünen*) “like a beautiful flower sprouting from the earth” (or like the ‘new Man’ rising from the corpse of the old one).

Behold ye then the creatures of this outer world, how all life, namely the essential fire-life, draws substance (*Wesen*) to itself, viz. its food (*Speise*), and how the life-fire then devours the substance and gives off the spirit of (vital) power, which is the life of all creatures. There you will be made to see how life originates from death. For no life comes into being unless it break through that out of which life must arise; everything must enter into Anguish (*die Angst*) and attain to the fire-lightning, otherwise there is no kindling (*De Incarn.* II.5.10).

However as of yet the dark ‘fire-hunger’ finds no fulfillment in the sharpness of the Water-spirit, for Fire and Water, Spirit and Nature, still

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Quality is ever ‘replaced’, but that each is dialectically *aufgehoben* (overcome, preserved, elevated) in the succeeding one.

<sup>19</sup> “In the beginning there was nothing here at all. By Death alone was this all covered, viz. by hunger; for what is hunger but death? And death made up his mind: ‘I want to become corporeal (*âtmanvin*)!’” (*ibid.* I.2). Like in Böhme this primordial ‘body’ is also ‘water’ (*vac*) which then ‘compacts’ and becomes ‘fire’. We should also note that the ‘body’ or corporeal ‘sheath’ (*kosha*) in which the flame of *prâna* burns is referred to as ‘food’ (*anna*) in Vedic literature (although this notion does not seem to attain the height of ‘spiritualization’ that it reaches in Böhme).

stand in their adversity, so that the anguish wheel becomes an infernal Ouroboros devouring itself in a painful wrath<sup>20</sup> (*Grimmigkeit*), a constant fleeing and chasing, “as a man gasping for air” (from which we also see how the eating and being-eaten, the eternal generating and devouring of itself, is but a further manifestation of the ‘windless breathing’ of the One); a *circulus diabolus* which seems nigh inescapable and which is only redeemed by a sudden break-through of the abyssal Freedom in a veritable *eucatastrophe*.

For once the ‘sting’ of the Spirit-will reaches the maximum of its ‘up-rising’ (from which it ‘discharges’ into the dreadful Flash, thereby enkindling the grim Fire-spirit) it too ‘sinks down’ as if in death, not violently subdued, but ‘freed’ from the bitterness of the sting mercilessly driving it upwards. And thus there is a gentle ‘letting go’, a will-less surrendering and yielding back into the Freedom from which is born the mild Light-spirit.<sup>21</sup>

For we have to remember that the Spirit-will, which is the very principle of movement, did not originally desire to be moved at all, but rather yearned for the eternal tranquility of the Deity. It only enters into motion (as the tractive ‘bitter-sting’) to counter-act the contractive desire of the Nature-will which draws it out of this tranquility into the darkness of the ‘Birth-wheel’ (“*ho trochos tês geneseôs*”, Jam. 3:6), which, ironically, it sets into motion itself precisely by its very traction!, that is to say, by the centrifugal movement away from the *centrum naturae* (which is a veritable ‘self-renouncement’, a ‘throwing-itself-out-of-itself’), such that the ‘actionless action’ of its non-desiring becomes the prime motor of the harsh desire contracting itself ever harder (“It desireth rest but maketh unrest”, *De Sign.* II.18).

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<sup>20</sup> In this grim ‘pain’ (*Peinlichkeit*) the essences, which have likewise attained to a first corporeal life in the *Schrack* as individual ‘centres’ (or *Eigenschaften*) – “infinite parts or beings (*Wesen*) which are yet but one Being” – become ‘sensous’ (*fühlig*) and their ‘cross-births’ make a veritable ‘boiling’ (“like a driving forth in itself, like a kindling in the dead essentiality”). To become redeemed from this wrath and transformed into the Light, each particular will-centre has likewise to kill its own ‘egoic contraction’ by a will-less sinking into the Freedom (“*abneget semetipsum*”).

<sup>21</sup> While the Light-spirit properly speaking pertains to the Light like the Fire-spirit does to the Fire, Böhme sometimes uses the term even prior to the ‘enkindling’, for it is a yearning for the Light and Freedom that is already present in the darkness (just like the ‘hungering’ of the Fire-spirit ‘precedes’ the actual Fire). Thus it is the Light-spirit which imagines (or puts its will) into the ‘Meekness’ (as into the Heart of God), that gives rise to the ‘light-water’ as well as the ‘Tincture’ (see below).

But now that the ‘old dragon’ of the harsh Nature is slain (its desire being arrested in the frightful ‘shock’) and that the bitter sting has literally gone up in flames, the Spirit-will (or Light-spirit) performs a complete reversal and lets itself fall back into the Centre in a perfect ‘yieldedness’ (*Gelassenheit*) and through this ‘humbling’ of itself into the Mercy (*Barmherzigkeit*) of God it enters back into itself, escaping into the Light of the ‘still mystery’. This is the end of the Wrath, for by its sinking into the Freedom there flows forth the ‘Meekness’ (*Sanftmut*) from the Divine Heart, like tears of joy or a sigh of relief, which makes the Water-spirit mild and calm.

And here we see that the ‘lightning’ (*Blitz*) is also a ‘leer’ (*Blick*), for with the opening of the Divine Centre there flashes through the ‘gaze’ of the Eternal Freedom, shattering the darkness; and this ‘flash’ (*Blitz – Blick*) marks the decisive middle point (*Scheidepunkt*) of the eternal Birth-wheel, its central axis, for (upon reaching the centre of the ‘cross’, i.e. the divine ‘Heart’) the hungering will of the Fire-spirit, flickering upwards from the watery matrix, is confronted by the Meekness and is as stunned (or ‘shocked’) by its tranquility. It now finds itself at a crossroads, either to imagine into the Meekness by feasting on the mild Water-spirit or to repel backwards in a *terror lucis* and to enter back into the harshness of Nature.

Thus the divine ‘gaze’ opens itself to two ‘eyes’ (famously depicted by Böhme himself in his *Philosophical Sphere*), a dark, fiery one and a light one, which are the two eternal Principles<sup>22</sup> (“the Fire is a Principle, and also the Light which is born from the Fire”, *Tabulae*, I.46) and thus we see how, with the death of (dark) Nature in the ‘flashing open’ (*aufblitzen*) of the abyssal Freedom, the end curves back into the beginning where it makes itself a new Beginning (or Principle), namely that of Light. For in a radical ‘leap of freedom’ the Fire-spirit plunges itself into the waters of meekness (the mild *Mercurius*) wherein its burning wrath is extinguished and transformed into a mild flame of love (the ‘Light-fire’) which enkindles the ‘Love-desire’ (*Liebebegierde*),

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<sup>22</sup> We should clarify that technically all three Principle originate in the Lightning at once (the third being the union of Fire and Light in one corporeity or *Wesenheit*), for the divine ‘gaze’ immediately sees with both ‘eyes’ at the same time, so that all Principles are absolutely ‘consubstantial’. Böhme’s ‘Tree of Life’ grows into two directions at the same time, downwards (into the dark root-principle of the Fire-world) and upwards (into the Light-principle) and the one cannot be without the other. Here we see once more that the Lightning is actually the ‘central axis’ of the eternal Birth and the *progressus* of all Qualities is at the same time a *regressus* and *ingressus*, so that it truly is “the Lightning which rules the All” (*τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰκίζει Κεραυνός*), as Heraclitus says.

marking the fifth Quality of eternal Nature. And here starts the light ternary, the ‘birth of the Son’ (*Lux vera*) properly so called, who shines into the darkness of the Father.

When the Fire-flash enters into its mother, the harshness, and finds her now overcome and mild, it is enormously startled (*erschrocken*) and in the overcome harshness immediately becomes white and bright and trembles and rejoices in its Mother. And now that this bright white light shines into the harshness it too is startled, so that it sinks down as if it were dead and overcome and expands and becomes very soft and thin so that her dark and hard wellspring appears now as a light and meek Water-spirit. And in this Joy, in the water-spring, the pleasant source of the bottomless Love rises up, and all that rises up there is the second Principle (*Tribus Prin.* IV.50)

This is the eternal victory of light over darkness, the divine Sun rising over the primordial waters, Christ eternal conquering the night of death. And in the splendor of divine majesty<sup>23</sup> the dark ternary (1-3 Quality) is transfigured into a ‘wheel of triumph’, a victorious breakthrough of light and love.<sup>24</sup>

When the fourth enters into the first, all the spirits intermingle their light, triumph, and rejoice. They then arise all one within the other, and evolve each other as if moving in circular motion; and the light in the midst of them begins to shine and renders them luminous (*Aurora*, XIII.80)

The whole of the light ternary can thus be seen as ‘transfigured’ repetition of the dark one and as such we are told that “the first and the seventh Quality must be regarded as one, likewise the second and sixth, and also the third and the fifth; whereas the fourth is the principle of

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<sup>23</sup> As Baader observes, *Majestas* is always the ‘splendor of Victory’, so that the divine Light is an eternal triumph over darkness, just like the Love of God is an eternally overcome Wrath.

<sup>24</sup> The eternal generation of the Divine Life is often described by Böhme by the image of candle: Fire burning in the ‘oil’ (or ‘coal’) of the dark ternary which then produces the ‘light’ of the divine manifestation. This triad of ‘light-fire-coal’, bears some analogical resemblance to the Hindu triplet *sattva-rajās-tamas* (likewise often described in terms of a ‘candle’ or a ‘flower’), the three fundamental qualities that inhere all of manifestation and which, at the very ‘summit’ of existence, manifest in the *Trimurti* of *Brahmā-Vishnu-Shiva*. As the Hindus hold that everything which exists partakes in these three attributes to varying degrees (while being absolutely undifferentiated in the Principle), so Böhme discerns in the (fallen) world the imprints or ‘signatures’ of all qualities, whereas in the divine world all stands in perfect equilibrium.



division” (*Clavis*, IX.75).<sup>25</sup>

However, given what we’ve said so far, it is also obvious that the fifth Quality (*Liebe-begierde*) likewise mirrors the first (*Begierde*), which manifests as a desire for substantiality that moves the ‘yielded’ Light-spirit back out of its tranquility, thus giving rise to the *Tincture*, which marks beginning of this ‘light-corporeity’ (*Lichtwesenheit*).

And hereby we give you earnestly to understand, that the source or property in the center – out of which the Fire-spirit goes forth upwards in the essentiality [i.e. the watery matrix], and where the death [of the ‘sting’] sinks downwards, and the [‘cross-births’ of the] essences sideways – generates another will, which has a desire to put the death, as also the fire in the sharpness, with the essences of the will, into the Freedom: and the will attains the Freedom, in the fire; and makes the fire shine bright, and makes the joy; and this second or comprehended will is called the Tincture. For it is a glance or splendor in the darkness, and has the power of life, and sprouts through the death of the essentiality and quiets the anguish (*Trip. Vita*, IV.17).

The Tincture can be seen as a transfiguration of the *Angst* which characterizes the third Quality; for whereas in the turning of the anguish-wheel harshness and bitterness ‘tasted’ each other in a sharp and repulsive ‘disgust’ (*Ekel*), it is the Tincture that transforms harshness and bitterness into a ‘sweet’ attraction and which joins the Fire- and (Water- or) Light-spirit in a loving union.

The whole begetting or generating falls into a glorious Love; for the

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<sup>25</sup> Böhme adds that “the first refers to the Father, the second to the Son, the third to the, Holy Spirit”. As we have already pointed out above, the ‘Mercury’ of the 2. (and 5.) Quality (pertaining to the Son) could be called the ‘principle of movement’ (i.e. that which gives rise to movement), whereas the ‘Sulphur’ of the 3. (and 6.) is the ‘movement-principle’ properly speaking (the Holy Spirit expired from the Son which is the movement itself). As such the ‘sting’ (as a fleeing movement), as well as the ‘air-spirit’ of the 2. Principle (which are both manifestations of the second Quality), are also linked to the Spirit, whereas the ‘yearning’ from which they originally take root could be linked to the Son, who longs for the Unity of the still Eternity. Generally we could say that whereas the Spirit (3. and 6.) is thus identified as the ‘movement’ of Father and Son, the 1. (and 7.) Quality, the principle of substantiality (‘Salt’) or ‘compaction’ (that which ‘draws in food’), pertains to the Nature-will of the Father, who desires multiplicity and individuation. From this we once more see how both tendencies are absolutely necessary for anything to become manifest, because if there was only the eternal Unity (Spirit) nothing could ever arise and if multiplicity (Nature) was total, everything would simply disintegrate.

harshness now loves the light dearly, because it is so refreshing, cheerly, and beautiful; for from this pleasant refreshing it becomes thus sweet, courteous, and humble (or lowly), and the bitterness now loves the harshness, because it is no more dark, nor so strongly (or fiercely) attractive to itself, but is sweet, mild, pure, and light (*Tribus Prin.* IV.51).

By ‘tincturing’ the meek Water-spirit, it is changed into a ‘Light-water’ with which the ‘Oil’ of the Tincture envelops itself so as not to be immediately devoured by the Fire and, feasting on this heavenly manna, the hunger of the Fire-will is finally quenched, so that Fire and Water (also bitterness and harshness, or even more fundamentally: Spirit and Nature) now enter into a hierogamy (Böhme also speaks of “kiss of Love” and of a “sweet embracing of Bride and Bridegroom”) which produces the ‘androgynous *Mercurius*’ or *Salitter* (also referred to as “ignited Light-water” or “luminous Fire-water”) as their ‘golden child’ (*filius philosophorum*), which is the ‘holy Element’ (*das heilige Element*) from which the Body of God is to be woven, and in which everything stands in a perfect harmony or ‘temperature’.<sup>26</sup>

Thus the infernal strive, the pushing and pulling, rising and falling, is transformed into the joyful play of a tender giving and taking – “The light giveth and the fire taketh”. For both Spirit and Nature have eternally desired their corporeity; the Fire-spirit needs a body on which to feed itself and the ‘substance’ of the (Light-)Water needs a spirit to ‘breath’ the *spiraculum vitae* into it and enkindle in it the ‘life-spark’.

Now Nature has been fully subdued by Spirit, not as a violent suppression, but as a loving submission, for “the desire of Freedom (5. Quality) tinctures the desire of Nature (1. Quality), so that the grim Nature lets go of her own desire and surrenders the desire of Freedom” (*De Signatura*, V.2). The Light willingly offers itself to the Fire as a sweet nourishment (*dulce refrigerium*) and the Fire feasts on the Light,

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<sup>26</sup> It is also in the fifth Quality that the manifold essences ‘come to themselves’ and find themselves in their ‘properties’ (i.e. in their proper character or ‘individuality’), so that Böhme now speaks of ‘Love-essences’ (*Liebe-Essenzen*) and of a watery, airy, oily and fiery spirit mingling in the ‘heavenly water’ of the holy Element as in a joyous play. These correspond to the first, second, third and fourth Quality respectively, the water being the substantial principle (1.), the air the principle of movement (2.) and the oil of the Tincture the ‘taste’ or ‘mingling’ (3.) of the two (now transformed from ‘sharp disgust’ into ‘sweet attraction’): “The first three principles are merely qualities conducive to life, the fourth is life itself, but the fifth is the true Spirit. When this quality is born from the fire, it dwells in the others [or ‘tinctures’ them] and transforms them into its mild love, so that the painfulness and adversity is not found in them anymore” (*Tabulae*, I.46).

thereby generating it (a nourishment that is thus never spent, for it is the “water of eternal Life” that wells up out of the infinite Ground of the *Ungrund* itself): “And thus there is an eternal generating and devouring and a giving and taking and there is neither beginning nor end” (*Mys. Mag.* VII.4).

Finally we might say that in the ‘love-desire’ of the fifth Quality what was dispersed in the ‘repulsive’ third Quality (multiplicity from unity) is now gathered back into harmonious unity of the Divine Heart (unity-in-multiplicity) and in the eternal dawn of the Son, the ‘irrational clock-work’ of the anguish-wheel is changed into a great symphony in which all parts yield to the divine Will in a loving inclination.

As the sun in the terrestrial plane transforms harshness into harmony, so acts the light of God in the forms of eternal Nature. This light shines into them and out of them; it ignites them so that they obtain its will and surrender themselves to it entirely. They then give up their own will and become as if they had no power at all of themselves, and are desirous only for the power of the light (*Sex puncta*, V.3.)

This light shines into the darkness – but yet the darkness comprehendeth it not. For whereas the first Principle could be described as a fiery hungering for form and substance, the second Principle merely yields form (the pure light of the divine Sun) and it is only in the third Principle<sup>27</sup> that they fully attain to substantiality and their

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<sup>27</sup> In speaking of the ‘third Principle’ we must however exercise great caution, for Böhme most frequently uses this term to refer to the fallen elemental world and confusing these two realities (as many commentators have done) must lead to the most erroneous distortions (like supposing that God needs to create the visible world to know Himself, which is nothing but pantheism plain and simple). While the three Principles can designate the three dialectical moments in the seven-fold cycle of the eternal Birth (as anti-thesis, thesis, synthesis), namely Nature (1. Principle), Spirit (2. Principle) and the embodiment of Spirit in Nature (3. Principle), i.e. the ‘Living God’ as the final ‘product’ of the Theogony, more often than not they are used to refer to the three ‘worlds’ or ‘kingdoms’ (viz. ‘principalities’), that is to say the dark Fire-world (the kingdom of Lucifer), the divine Light-world (as comprising the total ‘synthesis’ of God’s self-manifestation), and the fallen astral/elemental world. These two ‘levels’ are not contradictory however, but merely pertain to different perspectives (*in via* and *in patria*). For *in divinis* all three Principles are eternally joined in one great Love and Joy, and there is no darkness in them; it is only when they are apprehended in separation (by the fallen creature) that they manifest externally as the opposition of Wrath and Light (such that for example the 1. Principle as eternal Nature *in divinis* is understood as good and loving, whereas considered

‘comprehensive’ union.

And thus the ingathered unity is once more diffused from the divine Heart, not as a silent ‘expiration’ but as intelligible sound, a great Cry of Joy<sup>28</sup> or a ‘Music’ (as Böhme says), in which the *harmonia praestabilita* resounds as great ‘reverberation’ (*Schall & Hall*).

The sixth form of eternal nature is intelligent life or sound. The qualities being all in a state of equilibrium in the light [the fifth Quality], they now rejoice and acquire audibility. Thereby the desire of the unity enters into a state of willing and acting, perceiving and feeling (*Tabulae*, I.48.)

In this harmony all the unique essences, vibrating as individual ‘strings’, are first apprehended in their ‘differentiation’ (*Schiedlichkeit*) and in the polyphony of this ‘audible life’ all powers begin to ‘hear’ on another,

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*quoad nos* as the ‘Fire-world’ it becomes the principle of evil). However Böhme can use the term ‘third Principle’ to refer to both the Light-manifestation of God as well as the fallen world because they absolutely ‘indwell’ each other and, in a sense, they are one (although not *the same*; we could speak of one Nature manifested in different degrees, the fallen and the divine world being, according to Böhme, separated by the ‘firmament’ of Gen. 1:6). As such we should also clarify that it is not the ‘Body of God’ which degenerates in the primordial rebellion of Lucifer (like some commentators have propounded), but rather the ‘body of Lucifer’ itself who was but a ‘member’ or ‘organ’ in the divine Body (“This world, to put it frankly, is a cancer in the body of God”, says Koyré; “*Die Schöpfung ist eine Wunde!*”, one wants to exclaim with Kleist). Böhme also calls it the ‘world of Lucifer’, i.e. the particular ‘realm’ over which Lucifer had presided (we can actually infer that there are many different ‘worlds’, roughly analogous to the different *lokas* in Hinduism, a veritable ‘divine cosmos’, in which the world of Lucifer constituted the highest of the angelic realms). The Body of God (the ‘third Principle’ as referred to *in divinis*) is the synthetic *Wesenheit* that unites all the divine Qualities into one harmonious whole and it is only via the manifestation of this Body that God is ‘God’ (i.e. *Ternario Sancto*): “The Trinity is first rightly understood in His eternal Manifestation (or Revelation); where He manifests Himself through the Eternal Nature, through the Fire in the Light” (*Mys. Mag.* VII.12). To say that this ‘Body’ (3. Principle) has fallen amounts to saying that God Himself fell, rending Father (1. Principle) and Son (2. Principle) asunder, which are eternally but one and indivisible (thereby effectively ‘killing God’!).

<sup>28</sup> “A great Joy rises up through all the Essences (in the 5. Quality), and declares to the second Principle, that the loving Child is born; to which then all the essences give heed and rejoice at that dear Child; from whence the Hearing arises, which is the sixth Form where the Wheel of the Birth stands in Triumph” (*Tribus Prin.* IV.52).

thereby attaining to their mutual comprehension (*Verständnis*).<sup>29</sup> “Every single string rejoices in the other” (*De Sign.* XV.52) as a *speculum universi*, and in their ‘love-play’ (*Liebespiel*) there opens up the great ‘World of Joy’ (*Freudereich*) which is the final end of all desire.

Here now (in the seventh Quality) is made manifest what was seen in the abyssal Mirror from eternity (and by virtue of the circular nature of the Eternal Birth we might say that the images appear in the esoteric mirror precisely as a reflection of their exoteric manifestation). The Word that had been spoken (or ‘expired’) in the still mystery is finally heard and “standeth as a Maiden in *Ternario Sancto*” (i.e. the Trinity manifested in Nature)<sup>30</sup>, as the “heavenly Eve”.

The seventh Quality is the corporeal comprehension of the other Qualities. It is called ‘substantial Wisdom’ (*wesenhafte Weisheit*) or the ‘Body of God’. The third Principle appears in the seven forms of nature in so far as they have been brought into comprehensibility (*Fasslichkeit*) in the seventh. This principle or state of being is holy, pure, and good. It is called the eternal uncreated Heaven or the Kingdom of God, and it is outspoken from the first Principle, of the dark Fire-world and from the holy light-flaming Love-world (*De Electione*, IV.10).

This is thus Wisdom-made-manifest, the ‘Kingdom’ of God, His ‘Glory’ (*doxa*) and His ‘Corporality’ – “*Leiblichkeit ist das Ende der Werke Gottes*”, as Oetinger famously said.

Wisdom is the substantiality of the Spirit. The Spirit wears it as a garment, and becomes revealed thereby. Without it the form of the Spirit would not be knowable; it is Spirit’s corporeity (*Trip. Vita*, V.50.)

And here is revealed the third Principle as the final product (or ‘effect’) of the theogonic process (*Natura creans et non creata*), the ‘divine World’ as the original, paradisiacal creation.

The Father, ruling in the Principle of Fire, eternally generates the Son by means of the seven Qualities of eternal Nature and the Son, who stands revealed in the Light of the second Principle, forever glorifies the Father and makes of His Wrath a fount of Love. The third Principle then

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<sup>29</sup> Some have called Sophia the ‘meta-tincture’ (*Übertinctur*), for just as the light-tincture (in the 5. Quality) brings all Qualities into a mutual harmony, so it is in (manifested) Wisdom that all the essences comprehend each other and form a great harmonious whole (hence why the seventh Quality is also called ‘Understanding’ or ‘Sympathy’ by Böhme).

<sup>30</sup> “The Ternary in the Substantiality (*Wesenheit*) ... this is what is called in all of my writings: *Ternarium Sanctium*” (*Trip. Vita*, V.39).

is ruled by the Holy Spirit, who goes forth as the ‘Air’ of the Fire and the Light, and who ‘reveals’ the Father to the Son in the Mirror of Wisdom. For He “works as a Formator in the powers”, He is the divine Pianist who moves as a great Will through the strings of the essences and makes them resound “as a lovely Song or a generative Harmony” (*Mys.* VI.2); He is the Weaver who weaves the luminous garments Divinity (“*der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid*”) – “Radiance sowing seed for its own Glory, like the seed of fine purple silk wrapping itself within, weaving itself a Palace”<sup>31</sup> (*Zohar* I.15). He is the Spirit of Life who makes the “paradisiacal fruits” sprout forth, and by His breath the essences become ‘living being’ (the angels), springing up like sparks from the divine Light.

The Holy Spirit reveals the Godhead in Nature. He extends the splendor of the Majesty, so that it may be recognized in the wonders of Nature ... He is not that splendor itself, but its power, and He introduces the splendor of the Majesty into the Substantiality wherein the Godhead is revealed (*Trip. Vita*, IV. 82, V.39).

In summary it appears thus as if, just as in Böhme there is a distinction between the ‘esoteric’ God that contemplates Himself in the ‘still mystery’ of the *Ungrund* and the ‘exoteric’, manifest God, who shines forth in Glory (analogous to the ‘lesser’ and ‘greater Face’ of Kabbala), we seem to meet in Böhme with ‘two’ Sophias (which are of course likewise but one inseparable reality): The esoteric Sophia (which Böhme calls ‘unsubstantial Wisdom’) as the virginal *Idea*, the Mirror (*speculum justitiae*) in which God first finds and ‘grasps’ Himself and in which is reflected the totality of the divine *pleroma* (the ‘blueprint’ of creation),

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<sup>31</sup> This ‘Palace’ – “The House of the Holy Trinity, and the Ornament of the Divine and Angelical Worlds” (*Sex puncta*, I.84) – is in the *Zohar* identified with the sefira *Binah* (‘Understanding’ or the ‘passive/receptive Wisdom’), which is the “House of Wisdom” (Prov. 9:1) woven by *Chockmah* (active/emanating Wisdom), also called “the Jerusalem which is above, our Mother” (Gal. 4:26). *Chockmah*, as the second sefira, is also often linked to the second Hebrew letter *beth*, which can likewise mean ‘house’ (*bayt*). Interestingly the title of “Heavenly Jerusalem” (“*Mater noster, Jerusalem quae sursum est et libera*”) not only given to “created Wisdom” by St. Augustine (cf. *Conf.* XII.20), but also to Mary, the “House of Gold” (*Domus aurea*): “*O domus luminosa et speciosa, dilexi decorem tuum et locum habitationis gloriae domini mei, fabricatoris et possessoris tui! ...*” And this “Holy City” not only Mother but also Bride (*testet Iohannes*; Rev. 21:2): *Binah* and *Malkut*, “the Mother Jerusalem and the holy and beautiful Bride Zion” (Augustine, *Liber Medit.* XIX).

and the exoteric (or ‘substantial’)<sup>32</sup> Wisdom in which the treasures contemplated from eternity are made manifest; the “radiant garments” of Divinity (“*Amictus lumine sicut vestimento*”, Ps. 104:2), the Body and Kingdom of God (*sedes sapientiae*), the “unapproachable Light” in which He dwells (1. Tim. 6:16), i.e. His *Glory* (‘irradiation’ or ‘periphery’).

She is the ‘image of God’, His ‘reflection’, the *logos ekthetos* that was uttered forth from eternity, “a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the Glory of the Almighty; a reflection of eternal Light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his Goodness” (Wis. 7:25-26).

As such there is in Böhme (contrary to the Arian and anti-Arian discourse) a clear distinction between Word and Wisdom, Logos and Sophia, *logos enthetos* and *logos ekthetos*: the “*Lumen illuminans et lumen illuminatum*” of St. Augustine. We might say that for Böhme the Word (i.e. the Son) is the ‘ground’ or ‘principle’ of speaking, the Holy Spirit is the speaking itself and Wisdom that which is spoken, or that *logos enthetos* and *ekthetots* relate to each other like Thought (or Concept) and the spoken Word. While Wisdom is thus distinct from God and not to be thought of as a ‘fourth Hypostasis’ (or a ‘Person’ at all)<sup>33</sup>, she is yet absolutely one with Him (for *manifestum*, *manifestans* and *manifestatum* are, in a sense, ‘consubstantial’).

Esoterically she is the *Theotokos*, the *medium quo* of the ‘immaculate conception’ of God in His Trinitarian Life (i.e. the ‘eternal band’ of the Deity) and exoterically she is that by which His manifestation *ad extra* is realized (*manifestatio gloriae Dei*), the ‘luminous veil’ which reveals and conceals Him in His great Glory.

The latter (‘substantial’) Wisdom might be called the reflection of the former on a ‘lower level’, being analogous to ‘Universal Possibility’ and *prima materia* (although the theosophical notion of ‘primordial substance’ strays quite far from the aristotelo-scholastic notion of *hyle*), or, in eastern terms, that of *mâyâ-shakti* and *mâyâ-prakriti*. As Guénon explains:

*Mâyâ* is the material power (*shakti*) through which divine understandings acts ... As such it is inherent to *Brahmâ* Himself, or to the Supreme

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<sup>32</sup> Following the terminology of Guénon we might also speak of an ‘essential’ and ‘substantial’ Wisdom.

<sup>33</sup> According to Baader, Sophia constitutes precisely that element of ‘apersonality’ *in divinis* which is the necessary basis for divine Personhood as such; she is the unpersonal ‘Mirror’ in which God beholds Himself as Person, the ‘Periphery’ through which the Centre becomes central.

Principle. It is therefore situated at an incomparably higher level than *prakriti*, and if the latter is also called *mâyâ*, notably in the *Sâmkhya*, this is because it is in reality but the reflection of this *shakti* in the ‘cosmological’ order (*Studies in Hinduism*, X).

Guénon also goes on to link this notion of *mâyâ* to that of Sophia as understood in the Judeo-Christian Tradition, calling it the “maternal aspect of the Principle”. The connection of *Mâyâ* and the Salomonic Wisdom has likewise been drawn by many Christian commentators (already Baader explicitly linked the Böhman idea of Sophia to the Hindu notion of *Mâyâ*, as did Coomaraswamy and others). Thus the Abbé Stéphane writes:

Being, according to René Guénon, is the primary determination of Non-Being. It corresponds to the Son, primary ‘determination’ of the Father. As for ‘Existence’, it has to be evidently considered in its principal reality; it is thus identifiable as *Mâyâ* or the Universal Possibility; this is *Mâyâ* in so far she is the *Theotokos*, that allows for the ‘existence’ of God, and she is also the Holy Spirit who ‘reveals’ the Father and the Son to each other [in His ‘hypostatic Maternity’]. The ‘descending Hypostases’ appear thus like degrees of the (principal) Reality or like the determinations of the Absolut in the relative, but always *in divinis*, which confers onto them the ‘illusory’ character of *Mâyâ*, for it is *in divinis* that *Mâyâ* has ‘conceived’ (the Immaculate Conception). *Mâyâ* is thus the ‘Play’ of God with Himself and is identifiable to Wisdom: ‘The Lord possessed me from the beginning of His ways, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting ... I was daily His delight, playing before Him at all times’. This is *Ânanda*, Blessedness, Love: ‘I am the ocean of Infinite Felicity, and it is in me, that at the capricious breath of *Mâyâ*, all the waves rise up and ripple”’ (*Ésoterisme Chrétien*, I.1.3).

Another obvious comparison is that of the kabbalistic notion of *Binah* and *Malkut* (the two ‘waters’ or ‘mothers’, as well as the two *Hehs* of the Tetragrammaton), as upper and lower aspects of the *Shekinah*, which are separated by the six sefirot of construction<sup>34</sup> (analogous to the six

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<sup>34</sup> However, according to the Kabbalists, this ‘separation’ is ultimately illusory. This is the mystical meaning of the Talmudic passage in which Rabbi Akiva warns us: “When you come to the place of pure marble stones, do not say, ‘Water! Water!’ because it is said, ‘He who speaks untruths shall not stand before My eyes’ (Ps. 101:7)” (cf. *Chagiga* 14B, *Zohar* I.26B). The “marble stones” are the upper and lower *yod* (י) that appear in the letter *alef* (א) and they are “pure” because the *waw* (ו) that connects and separates them has disappeared. Since the ‘full’ *alef* (*yod-waw-yod* = 26) is mystically equivalent to the divine Name YHWH (10-5-6-5 = 26) this symbolism likewise applies to the



Qualities of Böhme, the seventh, *Malkut*, the ‘Kingdom’, being Wisdom-made-manifest).<sup>35</sup> Like (essential) Wisdom, *Binah* pertains to the triad of supernal sefirot which transcend all manifestation (just like the Böhme’s ‘clear Deity’ is above the seven Qualities of eternal Nature) and is often described as a Mirror.

In sefirotic language it is said that *Keter*, the supreme Principle, sees itself through *Chokmah*, the ‘Wisdom’ or first irradiation, in the mirror of *Binah*, the ‘Intelligence’ or infinite receptivity. In this supreme mirror God contemplates His seven lordly aspects (Schaya, *Universal Aspects*, VI)

According to this analogy *Keter* corresponds to the Father, the primordial Will (*Arich Anpin*), *Chokmah* to the Son (as the ‘Eye’ of the Father), and *Binah* to the ‘Mirror of Wisdom’. Similar to the elliptical movement of Böhme’s Deity, the relation of the three supernal sefirot is often described in terms of a circle; *Keter* being the “primordial point” (*Nequdah Rashunah*), *Chokmah* the ‘emanative’ radius and *Binah* forming (like Böhme’s Sophia) the periphery.<sup>36</sup> This analogy becomes even more astounding when we remember that (contrary to this rather simplified presentation), it is technically not *Keter* itself which marks the

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Tetragrammaton: The place where the marbles meet is Paradise and he who is still seeing the *Waw*, the ‘firmament’ between the upper and lower waters (the two *Hehs*) cannot enter its gates. Thus, saying “water-water” means committing the ‘sin of seperation’ and falling into the illusion of duality – “The seven heavens are on earth”. We might note in passing that the ultimate symbol for this non-duality of ‘above and below’ is furnished by the image of the ‘Cross planted at the top of the Mountain’ (*El-Elyon = Emmanuel*).

<sup>35</sup> The manifestation of *Binah* (or her reflection on a lower level) is *avira kadmon*, which is the primordial substance, corresponding to Böhme’s idea of the ‘holy element’ in which all stands in a harmonious ‘temperature’ (or, in Hindu terms: *mulaprakriti* in which the three *gunas* are yet in perfect balance). *Binah* is also called the ‘supernal Mother’ and *Malkut*, her ‘daughter’, the ‘lesser Mother’, so that we might also think of Ss. Anne and Mary in this context (*Anna Selbdritt*). In this analogy St. Anne would correspond to ‘essential Wisdom’, while Mary is ‘substantial Wisdom’, God’s immanence that ‘bears the bitterness of time’. There is indeed an interesting connection that could be made between the sacred Virgin of the Celtic mysteries (*Anna*, or *Ana*, *Anu*, *Anis*) and Wisdom; *anna* (skr.) meaning ‘food’, while the word for ‘wisdom’ in both Hebrew (*chokmah*) and Latin (*sapere*, *sapientia*) can be rendered as ‘taste’.

<sup>36</sup> We might also say that, similar to how to the ‘essential Wisdom’ (*Binah*) manifest on the lower level as ‘substantial Wisdom’ (*Malkut*), so the ‘Divine Heart’ of the Abyssal Deity (*Keter* as the primordial Centre which is yet non-dual with *Ain*) manifest in Nature (5<sup>th</sup> Quality) as the Spiritual Sun (*Tiferet* as the ‘Heart of Manifestation’).

primordial point (as the Kabbalists tell us), but actually *Chockmah*, for the first letter (sefira) that appears in manifestation (viz. in the Torah) is *beth* (*Chockmah*), whereas the letter *alef* (*Keter*) was “before everything, even before the Torah” (*Bahir* §17).<sup>37</sup>

The non-duality of *Keter-Chockmah* (*ab* = “Father”) as the principal point is represented by the letter *yod* (י), the upper tip of the ideogram being *Keter* (as the supernal Principle), the middle ‘bar’ *Chockmah* in its aspect as primordial point and the lower tip *Chockmah* as the irradiation (or radius) going out from this point (into the periphery that is *Binah*).<sup>38</sup> Here we have the whole divine ‘Quaternary’ of Böhme, *Keter* being the Father (abyssal Will), the ‘Point’ the Son (the Centre) and the ‘Radius’ (or diffusion) the Spirit, which then discloses the Mirror of Wisdom (*Binah*).

Finally the Mirror of *Binah* (in her aspect as *Shekinah*) is likewise called the ‘maternal matrix’ (Böhme’s ‘virginal matrix’) and the ‘womb’ or ‘luminous space’ of manifestation.

*Shekinah* is like a pregnant woman who is continually gestating, giving birth, and nourishing her children. Divine space is called ‘mother’ because it shares its lifeblood with its progeny like a womb. The ‘children’ are the

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Zohar*, I.7b: “‘The beginning of wisdom is fear of YHVH’, etc. (Ps. 111:10). ‘The beginning of wisdom’ – this verse should read ‘The end of wisdom is fear of YHVH’, because awe of YHVH is really the end of Wisdom. However, it enables one to enter the level of supernal Wisdom, as is written: Open for me gates of righteousness. This is the gate to YHVH (Ps. 118:19-20). Truly! For unless one enters this gate, one will never enter. ‘This can be compared to an exalted king – high, concealed, and hidden away – who built gates for himself, one above the other. At the end of all the gates, he fashioned one gate with many locks, openings, palaces – one above the other. He said, ‘Whoever wishes to enter my presence, this gate will be first. Whoever enters, will enter through this gate’. ‘Similarly, the first gate to supernal Wisdom is awe of YHVH. This is *resheet*, ‘beginning’; *beth* (ב) – two joined together as one. These are two points: one hidden and concealed, one existing overtly. Since they are inseparable, they are called *resheet*, beginning – one, not two. Whoever attains one attains the other. All is one, for He and His name are one, as is written: ‘They will know that You, YHVH, alone are Your name’ (Ps. 83:19)”. Also *ibid.* I.31b: “בראשית (*Be-resheet*), In the beginning – ב ראשית (*Beth, resheet*), ‘two, beginning,’ for though second by count, it is called beginning. For the supernal, concealed Crown is first, but since it is not included in the count, the second is beginning. So: ב ראשית (*Bet, reshith*), ‘two, beginning’.”

<sup>38</sup> “*Yod* is a foundation: its roots [*Keter*] are rooted and its streams [*Chockmah*] are connected and its droplets [*Binah*] are based in the wholeness of the circle” (*Ma’ayan Chockmah*).

endless reflections that arise and dissolve from its mirror-like nature (Smith, *Kabbalistic Mirror*, II).

*Malkut* (the ‘lesser Mother’) finally is likewise described as the circumference of the six sefirot of construction (as the six cardinal directions of the ‘sphere’ of the ‘lower Face’); she is the passive receptacle, the ‘sea’ into in which all the streams of the previous sefirot ‘flow into’ and are gathered, just like in the manifest Wisdom of Böhme’s seventh Quality all prior Qualities are summed up in one harmonious whole in which they dwell “as the soul in a body” (*Tabula*, I.49).<sup>39</sup> In her ‘luminous space’ or ‘reflectivity’ the ‘lordly aspects’ that were seen in the esoteric Mirror from eternity (albeit *per speculum in aenigmate*) now appear in all the full beauty of their manifold “Colours, Powers, and Virtues” (*Farben, Kräfte, Tugenden*). This passive, mirroring quality of substantial Wisdom is further underscored by Böhme calling the seventh Quality “*Luna*”, the Moon being likewise the planet which is ascribed to *Malkut* by the Kabbalists. When we have thus previously said that the ‘Birth-wheel’ has seven ‘spokes’, we could now more accurately say that there are actually only six, the seventh Quality being the ‘rim’ or ‘hoop’ which encompasses them all.

Although there are obviously many correspondences between Böhman theosophy and the Kabbala (that have long been pointed out by many a commentator), these should not be overemphasized, for there are

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<sup>39</sup> And *mutatis mutandis* we could also say that the soul is, in Böhman theosophy, called to realize this sophianic quality, to become the locus for the birth of God, to reclaim its “celestial essentiality” (*himmlische Wesenheit*). For the soul of man is (in its unregenerate state) a pandemonium, “not a simple monad but a wheel of Ixion”, as Oetinger says (contra Leibniz and Wolff). It is nothing else than hell itself: “*l’âme est l’enfer qui est dans l’homme*”, as Koyré observes, “it is the interior demon that that man has to overcome in order to be reborn, to be born in spirit, to birth himself in God” (*La Philosophie de Jacob Böhme*, II.2). It is dark, harsh Nature that has to be transformed by becoming the locus for the birth of God, a locus of “incarnation” realizing the receptivity of *Malkut*. It is here that the generation of God and the cosmos finds, in a sense, its completion and Sabbath, and the world only exist because “God had thirst for our souls” (*Gott dürstete nach unserer Seele*). For God wants to be revealed not only in the macrocosm but also in the microcosm, and God is only truly “God” once he is revealed – as Love – in the mirror of the soul, recalling the saying of St. Maximus that God Himself becomes “humanized” insofar as man becomes deified. Thus the soul of man, the great “repairer” of the fallen universe, becomes the locus of restoration, where all is unified. When it unites in itself the two Principles, it becomes itself ‘Sophia’, the “athanor” in which the world is enhyposatized into God.

likewise many differences (one of them being the notion of the Lightning which is – quite literally – ‘central’ to the Böhman ‘wheel’ and which finds no direct analogue in the Jewish doctrine). *In toto* we might say that the Kabbala works with a more emanational (or ‘agapic’) perspective, whereas theosophy puts greater emphasis on the (‘erotic’) aspect of the Will and is more thoroughly Trinitarian and Christological (although patterns of three obviously feature prominently in Kabbala as well).

## I.2. Sophia-Maria and Celestial Man

Finally, to end off this survey of the Böhman ‘Sophiology’, we want to briefly touch one more aspect of Wisdom, which is of great importance in the theosophical mythos, namely that of her role as ‘celestial Humanity’.<sup>40</sup>

As we read in Scripture, the first Adam is created “in the image and likeness of God”, which for Böhme likewise means that he is a perfect manifestation of Wisdom as such. In a sense, Sophia *is* the very ‘image of God’ with which Adam was bestowed as his ‘bride’ and the ‘gift of his divine sonhood’ (“*das als Gabe uns gegebene und anvertraute Geistwesen der Sohnschaft*”). Just like in (substantial) Wisdom all powers are manifested in a perfect harmony, so in Man, standing in all three Principles (i.e. participating in the fullness of divine qualities), this harmony is once more achieved. We might say that what is seen in the Mirror of Wisdom from eternity, the unity of all archetypes, is nothing but ‘Universal Man’ (who is thus ultimately a reflection of the Logos itself, the eternal Adam *in divinis*). The first Adam then, as the perfect (personal) manifestation of this prototype, truly is the ‘spouse’ of the celestial Virgin and a Child of the Most High.

The soul's image stood in the virgin image which in the Deity had been seen from eternity. The pure image of Adam came from the Wisdom of God. For God willed to see and manifest Himself thus in an image, and that was the likeness according to God's Spirit, according to the Triad, an image entirely chaste, like the angels of God. In this image Adam was the child of God – not only a likeness, but a child, born of God, of the Being of all beings. *De Incarn.* I.24).

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<sup>40</sup> Baader also draws a connection between Sophia and *Adam Kadmon* as the ‘celestial human prototype’. As such Sophia is the ‘image’ (idea) of humanity (the ‘Adam’ of Gen. 1:27) after which the creaturely Adam (the *Adam ha-Rishon* of Gen. 2:7) was created and which he has to ‘confirm’ or ‘fixate’ by his ‘marital union’ with the *Idea*.

Being betrothed to Sophia (as the ‘meta-tincture’) he stands in the temperature of the ‘holy element’, untainted by the world of separation and corruption and there was no blemish to be found in him. This is also why Böhme conceives of the *protos adam* as androgynous or as a ‘man-like virgin’ (*männliche Jungfrau*).

Adam was a complete image of God, he was male and female and yet neither of both, but like a chaste virgin. He had the desire of both the Fire and the Light in him, the mother of Love and Wrath, and in him the Fire loved the Light as its soothing and pleasure and the Light loved the Fire as its life, just like God-Father loves the Son and the Son the Father in such manner (*Stiefel*, II.351).

We see that androgyny in Böhme means being ‘above gender’ (“neither male nor female”) and is thus not to be confused with ‘bi-sexuality’ or ‘hermaphroditism’ (which is, as Baader points us, but a caricature or inversion of true androgyny). The polarity of sexes pertains only to the elemental world, but being a perfect image of God, in Adam both the Fire- and the Light-spirit, male and female (or ‘fiery’ and ‘aqueous’) tincture (these being also a reflection of the divine Bi-unity of Nature and Spirit, Wrath and Love, Father and Son, etc.) embraced each other in a “conjunction of love”, standing “in the virginal centre as a paradisiacal rose- and pleasure-garden” (*Mys. Mag.* XVIII.2)

However this image is not yet ‘fixed’ or ‘confirmed’ (*fixiert, gefasst*). In his child-like innocence, Adam, who in the divine plan is supposed to be the kingly ruler of creation and the ‘regenerator’ of the fallen world (plunged into the *turba* by Lucifer), is still ‘undetermined’ (*labil*), having not yet ‘negated’ (*tilgen*) the *posse animal fieri* (or *posse mas et foemina fieri*) in himself. In order to rule over nature he has to keep the outer world (the third Principle) submitted to himself (mirroring the submission of Nature to Spirit *in divinis*), without giving in to its many temptations. The only way to overcome nature, to overcome himself, is to imagine into the Divine Heart and to subject himself fully to the divine Will and only through this ‘subjection’ – which is at the same time a true ‘subjectivation’ (*Verselbständigung*), i.e. a ‘coming to himself’ by the passage from *Abbild* to *Urbild* and an entering into the archetype – can this *posse*, this ‘potential’, be ‘sublimated’ (*aufgehoben*) and his true idea be ‘fixated’ in the Divine Wisdom. However as long as he isn’t ‘decided’ all powers do battle for him and in him.

All three Kingdoms grasped for Adam and would fain have him; for he was a great lord out of all the powers of Nature. The Heart of God desired to

have him in Paradise, and would dwell in him; for it said: it is my image and similitude. And the Kingdom of Wrath would also have him, for it said: he is mine, and he is out of my fountain, out of the eternal Mind of the Darkness; I will be in him, and he shall live in my might, for he is generated out of that which is mine; I will, through him, shew great and strong power. So too the Kingdom of this World said: he is mine, for he bears my image, and he lives in that which is mine, and I in him; he must be obedient to me, I will tame him and compel him, I have all my members in him, and he in me; I am greater than he and he must be my Householder. I will show my fair wonders and virtues in him, and he must manifest my wonders and virtues, and shall keep and manage my herds, I will clothe him with my fair glory; as now it is to be seen (*Tribus Prin.* XI.33).

Thus there is raging a true battle for the soul of Man, but in the end, Adam is not able to resist; he succumbs to the ‘downwards tendency’ (*Nieder-tracht*) of the ‘earthly spirit’ and imagines into the third Principle, the Kingdom of this World, thereby becoming subjected to it.

Already when God presents him the animals, he, upon ‘seeing’ (*mirrare*) the duality (bi-sexuality) in nature, is seduced into ‘developing’ the *posse mas et foemina fieri* instead of ‘overcoming’ (*aufheben*) it. Ensnared by this ‘possibility’ he ‘imagines’ into the lower animal nature (“*ein Imaginiren und sich Versehen in die Thiernatur*”) and falls under the dominion of *spiritus mundi*. His ‘sleep’ (Gen. 2:21) is thus already conceived as a *petite mort* (Hypnos is the brother of Thanatos after all), a ‘descend’<sup>41</sup> into the astral or ‘sidereal’ realm. He wakes up deprived of his heavenly Corporeity (*Wesenheit*) and clothed in a material body, finding that his celestial Spouse (“the woman of his youth”, as Salomon says) has fled him due to his unfaithfulness; for his ‘false imagination’ (*Einbildung*) has led to a loss (or rather a ‘darkening’) of his divine image (*Entbildung* or *Verbildung*) and instead of his ‘internal aid’ (“*Weisheit ist Weiserin*”) he’s now confronted with an external companion which is “flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone”.

After Adam had been overcome, the Tincture, wherein the beautiful Virgin had previously dwelt, became terrestrial, faint, and feeble. The powerful source of the Tincture, wherefrom the Virgin had her power, without being subjected to sleep, left Adam and went into its own principle (*Tribus Prin.* III.8).

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<sup>41</sup> The word for this ‘deep sleep’ (*tardema*) in Hebrew is already indicating this ‘downwards movement’. We might also point to the negative connotation of ‘sleep’ in the Gospels (cf. for example the ‘foolish virgins’) and much of patristic literature.

As such for Böhme the Fall already commences with the naming of the animals. By awakening his sinful desire to ‘produce’ or ‘develop’, the ‘oil’ of the Tincture (which had previously held all powers in harmony) is spoiled and the union of fire- and water-spirit degenerates into a hostile struggle. The separation of sexes is then effected to limit the damage of Adam’s ‘adultery’<sup>42</sup> (“*non est homini bonum solum esse*”) and to restrain his further descent into ‘bad androgyny’ (i.e. from the unitive pole of ‘quality’ to the dispersion of ‘quantity’). With the loss of the Tincture, the masculine (or fiery) spirit is raging fiercely against the feminine/aqueous one, such that Adam is in danger of being entirely consumed by the wrath-fire. And so God separates fire from water, detaching (or ‘externalizing’) his aqueous tincture via the creation of Eve and, as Böhme says, if God hadn’t divided both tinctures, Adam might have very well “made a devil out of himself” (*Stief.* II.363).

Woman appears thus as the fall of man but also as his redemption, curse and blessing at once, and without her Adam would’ve been lost to the eternal Wrath. It is woman in whom dwells the mild light-spirit (while remembering that every man carries both tinctures at least *in potentia*) and as such it also Mary, the new Eve, that eventually gives birth to the Saviour; she is the *janua coeli* through which the divine Physician enters the world who finally heals the Adamic wounds.

We see thus how the separation of sexes is conceived of by Böhme as a tragedy, the wound (and remedy) of an primordial transgression, similar to how in many ecclesiastical authors such as St. Maximus, Erigena, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, this partition is likewise interpreted as a ‘preventive’ measure to mitigate the effects of an already inevitable Fall. It is this ‘wound’ below his heart, the hole in his thorax from whence Eve was taken, which, in the theosophic mythos, marks the wound of the Grail-king and ultimately the wound of sin as such (and it from this very wound, pierced by the lance of St. Longinus, that Christ

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<sup>42</sup> A similar idea is also found in one Rabbinical interpretation, according to which the androgynous Adam “fornicated” with all the animals and was then split into male and female as a punishment. This “fornication” is of course likewise to be understood as a ‘spiritual adultery’, a turning away from God and towards the lower creation. But the story also conveys a deeper meaning, for it obviously plays on the ambiguous sense of the word “to know” that is often found in Scripture (“And Adam *knew* his wife”, etc.). Knowledge is understood as a ‘union’ (hence why in Kabbalah the union of the Supernal Father *Chockmah* and the Great Mother *Binah* is called *Daath*, ‘Knowledge’) and thus saying that Adam “fornicated” with the animals means also the he knew their essences and that this knowledge was yet perfectly non-dual, a participation in the Divine Knowing in which there is no separation and otherness.

gives birth to his Bride the Church, thereby restoring androgynous wholeness).

We might say that Eve and Adam (originally destined to ‘mirror God’) now ‘mirror’ each other ‘horizontally’ so as to stop a further vertical (or ‘tamastic’) descent towards the ‘infernal pole’ of the being, and if it were not for divine intervention, His merciful *descensus*, man would’ve been forever locked in the horizontal plane deprived of all verticality. However at the very moment that Adam abandons the virginal *Imaginatrix*, the divine Heart was ‘moved’ in its infinite Mercy and Jesus (the ray of divine Love) entered into Sophia (archetypical Humanity) in a ‘spiritual incarnation’ (*geistige Menschwerdung*), assuming the human form like He would later assume the flesh to restore<sup>43</sup> the divine image to its rightful place and make the full redemption of mankind once more possible (in the *carofactio*)<sup>44</sup>; and it is in this sense that all humanity, from the beginning of the world, has been “chosen in the name of Jesus”<sup>45</sup> (*versehen mit dem Namen Jesu*; cf. Eph. 1).

At the moment of the Fall, in which man went out of the Divine *Idea*, ‘Jesus’ (the procession and movement of the Divine Heart) entered into the archetype (*Urbild*) of man and became ‘Christ’, i.e. spiritual Man (Logos

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<sup>43</sup> Which is not really a ‘restoration’ (*Wiederherstellung*) properly so called, but rather the ‘realization’ (*Herstellung*) of this image in the first place (since Adam failed to do so), the ‘confirmation’ or ‘incarnation’ (*Leibhaftwerdung*) of Sophia being only achieved in Christ. This ‘restoration’ is also a restoring of the union of ‘fiery’ and ‘aqueous’ tincture in the androgynous ‘mercury’; a union that can also be ‘anticipated’ here *in via* by love. Likewise, in Kabbala, ‘restoration’ (*tikkun*) is achieved by uniting the feminine (*Malkut*) with the masculine (*Tiferet*) aspects of God (the ‘daughter’ and the ‘Son’), a ‘unification’ which clearly prefigures the hierogamy of Christ and Ecclesia, which is also the union of God and Sophia, her ‘assumption’ or ‘reintegration’, for which “all of nature groaneth and travaileth”.

<sup>44</sup> We can thus distinguish three ‘Births’ of the Son in Böhme: one from Eternity in the Godhead (*ex Sophia virgine*), one ‘spiritually’ at the moment of the Fall, and one ‘fleshly’ in time (*ex Maria virgine*), these corresponding to the names ‘Jesus’, ‘Christ’ and ‘Son of Mary’ respectively.

<sup>45</sup> This is not to be understood as if Böhme was teaching some shallow universalism or anything of this kind (in fact Böhme is adamant about the reality and eternity of Hell). The verb ‘*versehen*’, which in this context is almost impossible to render accurately, means more literally ‘seen’ or ‘endowed’; all of humanity being “endowed with” (or “seen in”) the name of Jesus simply means that all men carry the *imago Dei* and share in the “Logos of whom all partake”.



became Sophia), for as soon as Adam abandoned his high place, another more powerful agent had to take his throne (Baader, *Theorie des Opfers*, II).

Thus God never fully abandoned His creation and as such Böhme even teaches that there was a presence of God among all people of good will at all times, even the pagans. Christ was shining through the hearts of men like a spiritual Sun, and if fallen humanity turned inwards to that law that is inscribed on their hearts (Rom. 2:15) they could, by the grace of God, even attain a certain kind of salvation. However Böhme is also a clear champion of the Patristic adage that “what Christ didn’t assume he cannot save” and thus for an integral salvation of man the ‘second Incarnation’ was necessary.

Before the Incarnation (*Menschwerdung*) the Word was indeed able to save the soul, so that it could endure before the Father in the Fire of His Severity, but not in the Bliss before the Light of the Holy Trinity. The resurrection from the grave could not be achieved then; if man was to rise from the grave, the Word needed to become man (*Tribus Prin.* XVIII.35).

Being born in the ‘virginal matrix’ of Mary in the flesh, Christ too is conceived of by Böhme as androgynous, even though he appeared as a man.

Christ received his soul from a woman, the Virgin Mary, but was himself a man, so that he might stand in the true Adamic image and to bring our divided vital qualities (*Lebenseigenschaften*), in which our will separated itself from God, back into harmony (*Temperatur*) and unity (*Mys. Mag.* LVI.21).

There’s thus a clear connection drawn by Böhme between the celestial Virgin Sophia and the Virgin Mary, such that the latter appears almost like an earthly manifestation (or ‘avatar’) of the latter. However Böhme stresses again and again that (contra Schwenkfeld and others) the Blessed Virgin was indeed fully human, a mortal woman born from human parents that was merely ‘endowed’ with the eternal Wisdom in virtue of her great holiness and purity. Again, “what Christ does not assume that He cannot save” and if Mary had been actually ‘divine’ “this would profit us poor children of Eve very little, having become earthly as we are, and bearing our souls in an earthly vessel” (*De Incarn.* I.8.1).

The pure and chaste Virgin in which God was born (i.e. Sophia) is an eternal Virgin in the presence of God. Before heaven and earth were created this Virgin was wholly pure and without stain; and that pure chaste Virgin of God put itself into Mary (*hat sich in Maria eingelassen*), so that her new

Man was in the holy Element of God; and therefore she was blessed among all women, and the Lord was with her, as the Angel said ... Thus we say of Mary: She has assumed (*ergriffen*) the holy heavenly eternal Virgin of God, and put on the holy and pure Element, together with Paradise, and yet was truly a Virgin in this World born to Joachim and Anna ... We cannot say, that the heavenly Virgin of the Mercy (*Barmherzigkeit*) of God is become earthly; but we say, that the soul of Mary has comprehended the heavenly Virgin; and that the heavenly Virgin has put the heavenly new pure garment of the holy Element out of the chaste Virgin of God, viz. out of the Mercy of God, on to the Soul of Mary, as a new regenerated Man; and in that same she has conceived the Saviour of all the World, and borne him into this World (cf. *Tribus Prin.* XXII).

Christ “recapitulating all things in Himself” (Eph. 1:10) and being completely ‘married’ to the *Idea*, He has fully ‘confirmed’ the image of celestial Humanity and by ‘putting on Christ’ we thus also put on the wedding garments of His heavenly bride Sophia.

## II. The Sophiology of Bulgakov

Böhmian Sophiology has been highly influential in Christian thought ever since its inception, not only in Theosophy (Baader, Oetinger, Gichtel, etc.) but also in Orthodox theology (which always had a natural affinity for the *Hagia Sophia*), especially of the Russian variety. Besides Solovyov, Florensky and Berdyayev, the most prolific figures among these modern Sophiologists is certainly Father Sergey Bulgakov.

Sophiology plays a central role in the massive work of Fr. Bulgakov and undergirds pretty much all his writings, so we cannot hope to give a holistic representation of all its aspect here but will instead content ourselves with only giving a very brief outline. The main impetus behind Bulgakov’s sophiological vision could be described as a resacralization of the cosmos, a rediscovery of its ‘theophanic’ character. He thus conceives of Sophiology as a *via media* between a Manichean dualism of God and the world on the one hand (which can be traced back to Scotism and in a sense even to Aristotle, who, despite his misguided criticism of Platonic idealism, was in fact far more dualistic than his mentor) and a false deification of the world in the vein of a shallow pantheism on the other; a balance or ‘mediation’ between immanence and transcendence which is badly needed, such that the very “future of living Christianity rests”, according to Bulgakov, “with a sophianic interpretation of the world and its destiny”.

Similar to Böhme's 'two faces' of Sophia (what we have termed 'essential' and 'substantial' Wisdom), Bulgakov too envisages Wisdom under a double aspect, namely what he calls 'divine' and 'created' Sophia (which are likewise but one reality).<sup>46</sup>

Following Solovyov, he essentially identifies Sophia with the Divine *Ousia* itself, even going so far as to say that the conception of *Ousia* as handed down through the perennial Church teaching "is but that of Sophia, less fully developed" (*Sophia*, I). As such she is the very Life of God, that 'Love' which God essentially is ("*Deus Caritas est*") and in which the Trinity eternally loves Itself, "the sum and unity of all His attributes" (*ibid.* III), belonging equally to each Person. She is the 'space' or 'medium' of the mutual self-revelation of the three Persons, yet in itself neither 'personal' (in the sense of the Hypostases *in divinis*) nor completely 'apersonal' but eternally 'hypostatized' in each of them, i.e. 'manifested' according to the different 'character' of each Person in a threefold modality.<sup>47</sup> The "tri-unity" of Sophia thus mirrors the "tri-

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<sup>46</sup> The notion of this 'double aspect' of Wisdom is also certainly not absent in ecclesiological Tradition. Already St. Thomas differentiates between the *Sapientia ingenita* (as *genitrix*) and the *Sapientia genita* within the Father, as do many of the Anti-Arian Fathers like Ss. Athanasius and Augustine: "Wisdom was created before all things: not that Wisdom, I mean, which is altogether equal and co-eternal unto the Father, by which all things were created, and in whom, being the beginning, Thou createdst heaven and earth; but that Wisdom verily which is created; that is to say, the intellectual nature; which by contemplating of the light, is become light: for this, though created, is also called Wisdom. But look what difference there is betwixt that light which enlighteneth, and the light that is enlightened, so much is there betwixt that Wisdom that creates, and this Wisdom which is created: like as there is betwixt that righteousness which justifieth, and that righteousness which is made by justification. For we also are called Thy righteousness; for so saith a certain servant of thine: That we may be made the righteousness of God in Him. Therefore since a certain created Wisdom was created before all things, the rational and intellectual mind of that chaste City of thine, our mother which is above, and is free, and eternal in the heavens" (St. Augustine, *Confessiones*, XII.15).

<sup>47</sup> To clarify the question of the 'personhood' of Sophia we could say that as unmanifest *Ousia* she is ahypostatic, or 'unpersonal love' (although even this reality cannot, in the last consequence, be entirely 'apersonal' for this would introduce deficiency into the Infinite), but as 'hypostatized' or manifested through the second and third Person (as the 'love of Love') she is 'personal love' and as such "not only an abstract idea or mirror of God" but conceived of as "a living essence, having person, hypostasis", so that Bulgakov even speaks of a 'fourth hypostasis': "Of course she is *different* from the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, and is a special hypostasis, of a different order, a fourth

unity” of God (*ibid.* II).

The Father is the very fount of the Godhead, “that speechless silence which is presupposed by the Word” (*ibid.*). He is, in a sense, unrevealed Ousia hypostatized, which is then ‘revealed’ via the dyad of Son and Spirit. He is the Principle of all self-disclosure, remaining in Himself eternally undisclosed.

The second Person, the “Word by whom all things were made”, the Image of the Father in which He reveals His infinite riches to Himself, is ‘hypostatic Wisdom’ itself, *Intellectus in se*. Sophia then, as Ousia hypostasized through the Logos, represents the ‘words of the Word’, or the ‘image of the Image’, i.e. the manifestation of His plenitude *ad extra* in the ‘world of ideas’ (*kosmos noetos*). As such she is the ‘objective principle’ of the Logos, His own self-revelation, the ‘outspoken Word’ (or, to pick up on Baader’s terminology: the *logos ekthetos*).

The Spirit lastly is the ‘hypostatic Love’ of Father and Son, their mutual ‘transparency’. In His ‘sophianic determination’ *ad extra* He manifests as the ‘breath of life’ who bestows reality on the ‘world of ideas’ and transforms it “into a living and real essence, into a self-sufficient creation of God, the *ens realissimum*, into a world<sup>48</sup> existing with the life of God” (*ibid.*).

If the revelation of God’s ‘Wisdom’ (or Truth) is effected through the Son, the Spirit effects that of His ‘Glory’ (or Beauty), these being conceived as *energeias* (in the Palamite sense) of the ineffable Ousia. Whereas the Word provides the ‘content’ and is the Spirit that gives ‘life’ (or ‘being’) – “Thou sendest forth thy Spirit and they are created” (Ps. 104:30).

We may conclude that ‘divine Sophia’ belongs to the Father as her

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hypostasis, She does not participate in the inner-divine life, she is not God, and that is why she does not convert the trihypostaseits into a tetrahypostaseity, the trinity into a quaternity” (cf. *Unfading Light* II.2.1).

<sup>48</sup> Similarly to Böhme, Bulgakov also characterizes this ‘world of God’ (His ‘Kingdom’/*Malkut*) as God’s ‘Body’, “an absolute, heavenly, spiritual body belonging to the divine Spirit in all the fullness of its self-revelation” (*Sophia*, III). This ‘corporality’ is also approached to the Plotinian notion of *hyle noete* as the ‘spiritual primordial substance’ (the *avir kadmon* of the Kabbalists) from which Bulgakov develops the notion of ‘sophianic corporality’ (Böhme’s *Himmliche Leiblichkeit*), especially with regards to the ‘heavenly bodies’ (*sômata epourania*, 1. Cor. 15:40) of the *anthropos pneumatikos* (or *anthropos ek ouranou*, 1. Cor. 15:47) spoken of by the Apostle. From this ‘sophianic corporality’ likewise flows a whole theory of Beauty and of the ‘eroticism of manifestation’ as the “interpenetration of form and matter, idea and body”, which constitutes “spiritual and holy corporality” (cf. *Unfading Light*, II.2.3).

ultimate Subject, who then discloses (or ‘manifests’) Himself through the two revealing Hypostases of Son and Spirit; she is the revelation of the Father *in* the Son *by* the Holy Spirit.

In summing up we can say that the entire Holy Trinity in its tri-unity ‘is Sophia’, just as all three hypostases are in their separateness ... The Father, *Deus absconditus*, possesses her as His revelation in the dyad of hypostases which reveal Him. The Son possesses Her as His own revelation, which is fulfilled, and accomplished through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity possesses her as her triune subject, as it exists in three different hypostases; and in its tri-unity has her as its one Ousia, which in its revelation is the divine Sophia (*ibid.*).

This revelation of Ousia *ad extra* via the ‘sophianic’ manifestations of Son and Spirit is necessitated by the fact that “God is Love” (1. Joh. 4:8), for Love being essentially kenotic, it desires its own ‘effusion’, to go forth from itself and to share itself with an ‘other’, and thus the circumincession of inner Divine Life ‘pours over’<sup>49</sup> as ‘created Sophia’ (the ‘love of Love’ or ‘personal love’) into the nothingness of creation.

The rays of love are poured out of Divine Fullness; in its superabundance the Divinity comes out of itself and illuminates the darkness of non-Divine nothing, nonbeing. The Divinity, which does not know envy or covetousness and in its infinity and absoluteness knows no increment, wants to summon towards its love even this nonbeing, the non-Divine life. In keeping with its Divine condescension, in the selflessness of love the Divinity wants the non-itself, the non-Divinity, and goes out of itself in creation (*Unfading Light*, II.2.1).

‘Created Sophia’ is the very foundation (*sub-stantia*) of creation, the created world being as it were “a reflection and a mirror of the world of God ... a sort of duplication of the divine Sophia” (*Sophia*, III).<sup>50</sup> Participating both in the divine and creaturely world and standing between them as a ‘mirror’ or a ‘veil’, she is the mediating principle par excellence, the *metaxu*<sup>51</sup> (or *Mediatrix*), the “Guardian Angel of

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Meister Eckhart’s notion of ‘boiling’ (*bullitio*) and ‘boiling over’ (*ebullitio*) we briefly laid out before.

<sup>50</sup> The similarities with the Böhman conception are obvious. We might also cite the saying of St. Bonaventure according to which “the entire world is like a single mirror full of lights presenting the divine Wisdom” (*Hexaemeron*, II.27).

<sup>51</sup> “In setting alongside itself the extra-Divine world, the Divinity thereby places between itself and the world a certain border and this border, which according to the concept itself is found between God and the world, the Creator and the

Creation” residing in the ‘gap’ between ‘being’ (or manifestation) and ‘super-being’ (the unmanifest), between the Non-being of God and the nothingness of creation.

Sophia unites God with the world as the one common principle, the divine ground of creaturely existence. Remaining one, Sophia exists in two modes, eternal and temporal, divine and creaturely (*ibid.*).

As *kosmos noetos* Sophia is not only the foundation, “the *noumen*, to *ontos on*, the *Ding an sich* of creation ... as it were the *natura naturans*, forming the basis of the *natura naturata*, of the creaturely world” (*Unfading Light*, II.2.1), but also its entelechy (for everything has to ‘become what it is’, i.e. actualize its ‘sophianic’ or ‘archetypical’ reality). Like in Böhme this *entelecheia* is realized fully in the Incarnation of the God-Man (and then continued in the Church as His *Corpus Mysticum*), the hypostatic union of His ‘two natures’ also signifying the marriage of ‘created’ and ‘divine Sophia’.<sup>52</sup>

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creature, is itself neither the one nor the other but something completely particular, simultaneously uniting and separating the one and the other (a certain *metaxu* in the sense of Plato)” (*Unfading Light*, II.2.1); this *metaxu* being of course (created) Sophia in her role as *mediatrix*. We might also once more recall the notion of Mary as the ‘moon’, i.e. as mediatrix between the ‘earth’ (aptly called ‘sublunary’ world) and the ‘Divine Sun’, or rather her Divine Son, *Solis justitiae* (and just like the Son of God descended into the world through the *janua coeli* of the Blessed Virgin, so we can only ascend to His right-hand side by passing through Mary by whose intercession we are made sons of God by grace (at this point it should’ve become clear, that the ‘Sophianic mystery’ is always also a ‘Marian mystery’). This likewise applies to the *Shekinah* under her aspect of *Matrona*: “All the messages sent here below by the supreme King pass through the intermediary of the Matrona, and all the messages sent to the supreme King from the world below first arrive at the Matrona who transmits them to him ... Thus she is the perfect mediatrix between heaven and earth” (*Zohar*, III.50b).

<sup>52</sup> “Christ our Lord in His ministry fully and entirely actualized all the potentialities of divine Wisdom even in his human nature” (*Sophia*, IV). The fact that the *carofactio* via Mary is effected by the descent of both Word and Spirit is for Bulgakov a further indication of the ‘double part’ played by Sophia in the Incarnation, as well as in its continuation through the Church (the ‘Mystical Body’ of Christ being likewise ‘vivified’ by the Pentecostal descent of the Spirit). This *Epiklesis* already points to ‘eschatological Pentecost’, the *parousia* of God as ‘all in all’, which is the final entelechy of the world and the consummation of the final marriage between ‘created Sophia’ (as represented by the bride Ecclesia and also by the Holy Spirit sent down into the world as divine

*Théôsis*, growing in conformity with the divine archetype, thus become also a veritable ‘sophianization’, the prototype of this transfigured or ‘sophianicized’ creation being the Blessed Virgin (whose Assumption can be seen as a kind of prefiguring of the universal *apokatastasis* or ‘restoration’ at the end of times): “In her is realized the purpose of creation, the complete penetration of the creature by Wisdom, the full accord of the created type with its prototype, its entire accomplishment” (*ibid.* VI).

Sophia is thus also conceived of as ‘Divine-humanity’ (or *Theanthropy*, ‘God-manhood’, an idea which likewise goes back to Solovyov), for Sophia (being the ‘image of the Image’, i.e. of the *Logos*, who is the ‘eternal Adam’ Himself, ‘hypostatic Humanity’ as such of which all human hypostases are mere reflections) is also “the heavenly type of humanity or, in a sense, heavenly humanity itself” (*ibid.* V).<sup>53</sup>

We might say that Sophia is the ‘world of ideas’ (the Platonic *Nous*), as well as the *anima mundi*<sup>54</sup>, the celestial Aphrodite (“*pasa psyche Aphroditê*” – Plotinus), which binds all things together into pan-unity with the ‘flaming band of love’ (“*desmo erotos agetou*”), *natura naturans*, the eternal Eve (*Hawwah*), ‘mother of all living’; like the Philonic *logos*, she is the mediating principle between God and the world (*janua coeli, regina angeli*), the Idea of celestial humanity and its ultimate entelechy. She is not only the all-embracing unity of the noetic and phenomenal world, but also that of the three Persons themselves, the very *Ousia* of the Godhead, the ‘black virgin’ (“*nigra sum sed formosa*”), honored by the Sufis under the name of *Laylâ* (the ‘lady of night’).<sup>55</sup> In summa: she is the eternal Shulamite (“*das Ewig-Weibliche*”), bride, mother and daughter, Ecclesia, Mary, yea, every holy soul which,

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Immanence) and ‘divine Sophia’ (the transcendent Word as Heavenly Bridegroom).

<sup>53</sup> Like Baader, Bulgakov connects his notion of Sophia explicitly with the Kabbalistic idea of *Adam Kadmon*.

<sup>54</sup> A conception that also finds correspondences with Baader, who likewise calls Sophia the *mundus archetypus* and *Nous*, as well as ‘divine world-soul’ and *spiritus mundi divini* (as opposed to the *spiritus mundi sidereus* of the fallen ‘elemental’ world).

<sup>55</sup> The symbolism of the ‘black virgin’ is certainly manifold and can not only designate the ‘dazzling obscurity’ of *Ousia* (or rather it’s ‘feminine’ aspect, the divine Infinity), also called the ‘black Paradise’ by the Sufis, but also *materia prima* (the ‘black virgin’ *Cybele* being also the ‘black cube’ *Kaaba*) of which we shall talk more below.

in becoming ‘virginal’, gives birth to the Word.<sup>56</sup>

No wonder then that Bulgakov’s Sophiology was accused of heresy by many of his contemporaries; for not only does it risk falling into a monism of Ousia by postulating Sophia as a kind of ‘common ground’ for both God and creation, but it is also in danger of making Sophia, in a sense, ‘greater’ than God Himself. The ‘hypostatization’ of Sophia as ‘personal being’, a ‘fourth hypostasis’ might also seem questionable to some (a problem which the Böhman notion of an ‘apersonal periphery’ or ‘mirror’ doesn’t run into).

It seems thus prudent to avoid a straight out identification of Sophia with Ousia and try to ‘banish’ her outside the inner sanctum of the Trinitarian *perichoresis* altogether. Does this mean banishing all notions of the ‘Divine Feminine’ out of God however? Not necessarily. Not only has Sophia (*logos ekthetos*) often been seen in conjunction with the Logos (“*Fons Sapientiae Verbum Dei*”, Eccl. 1.5) as His ‘bride’ or ‘syzygy’ (a notion already present in Philo), but there is also a tradition that links the Maternity *in divinis*, the *Theotokos* (*Panagia*), to the Person of the Holy Spirit (*Panagion*).

We’d like to point here to the notion of the ‘hypostatic Maternity’ of the Spirit, a phrase coined originally by Fr. Bulgakov himself and subsequently developed by both Paul Evdokimov and Jean Borella.

### III. Hypostatic Maternity and Borella’s Sophiology

Now the notion of the ‘motherhood’ of the Holy Spirit (who is “the Spirit of Wisdom” after all) is certainly nothing new, but goes back to ancient times. Not only is the *Ruach Elohim* (whom Christians naturally identify with the third Person of the Trinity) that is ‘hovering’ (or, according to other manuscripts: “fermenting” or “brooding”)<sup>57</sup> over the waters *in*

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<sup>56</sup> “With her face turned towards God, she is His Image, Idea, Name. Turned towards nothing, she is the eternal foundation of the world, Heavenly Aphrodite as Plato and Plotinus called her ... She is the empyrean world of intelligible, eternal ideas ... Plato’s doctrine, the world of ideas is nothing other than Sophia, i.e., while it is the living relation of Divinity it is still not Divinity itself. It does not have its own power, but receives it from God and is the glory of the Word of God ... As the entelechy of the world, in her cosmic aspect Sophia is the world soul, i.e. the principle that links and organizes the world’s plurality ... Sophia, as the all-unity (*hen kai pan*), the virginity of the creature, holds everything in herself in a higher confluence of unity” (*Unfading Light*, II.2.1).

<sup>57</sup> Thus we read for example in St. Ephrem the Syrian: “The Holy Spirit warmed the waters and made them fertile and capable of birth, like a bird when it sits



*principio*<sup>58</sup> (Gen. 1:2) conceived of as ‘female’ (the *Shekinah*, whose symbol is likewise the ‘dove’<sup>59</sup>, the ‘mother-bird’ or *peristera* of the New Testament epiphanies), but traces of this tradition are likewise found in early Christianity, especially in Syria (the word for ‘Spirit’ being likewise female in the Syriac language).<sup>60</sup> Even Holy Scripture seems to give us a hint of this ‘esoteric’ femininity when Christ talks about the Spirit under His aspect of ‘living water’ (Joh. 7:37-39), which dwells in the bosom of the Saviour and is then ‘poured out’ at His exaltation on the Cross (Joh. 19:34) – an event that even the earliest Fathers have interpreted as the ‘birth’ of the Church (the ‘bride’) from the side of Christ, her Bridegroom (an image which, *ut supra dixi*, also points us to the restoration of primordial androgyny).

For Evodkimov the Word (which ‘expresses’, ‘orders’, ‘structures’) represents the ‘masculine’ and the Spirit (who ‘incarnates’, ‘inspires’, ‘consoles’) the ‘feminine’ aspect of the Godhead; yea, He is in a sense ‘archetypal Womanhood’ itself, and as such also represents the

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with its outstretched wings on its eggs and by its warmth gives them warmth and produces fertility in them” (*In Gen.*). Similarly St. Augustine who compares the “Spirit brooding over the waters” to “a bird that broods over its eggs, the mother somehow helping in the development of her young by the warmth from her body, through an affection of love” (*De Genesi ad. lit.* II.18); an interpretation also found in Ambrose (*Hexaem.* I.8.29) and Basil the Great (*Hexaem.* II.6). The image of the mother bird ‘fermenting the waters’ is of course also to be found in the Hindu Tradition. Thus, according to the Vedic sources, it is the swan *Hamsa* that ‘hatches’ the cosmic egg (*brahmānda*) in the ‘nest’ of the primordial deep. And even Lao Tzu compares the *Tao* with a “female bird” which “produces all things and nourishes them” (*Tao te Ching*, X).

<sup>58</sup> We might also draw a connection between the ‘seven pillars’ that Wisdom built her house on *in principio* and the ‘seven gifts of the Spirit’, as well as the ‘seven sacraments’ of the Church and the ‘seven sorrows’ of the *Mater Dolorosa*.

<sup>59</sup> We’d like to note *en passant* that the Blessed Virgin has likewise been praised as ‘dove’ in many liturgical texts (a reference to Cant. 2:10; 6:8). In fact one of the very oldest Marian prayers known to us praises her as the “Dove who has snatched mankind from death”.

<sup>60</sup> Thus for example the Syriac *Didascalia apostolorum* (third century) refers to the deacon as an image of Christ and to the deaconess as an image of the Holy Spirit. In his homilies St Macarius likewise speaks of “the true, heavenly Father and the good, kind Mother, the grace of the Spirit”. Finally, in the apocryphal *Gospel according to the Hebrews* (which was still positively received by St. Jerome any other early Father) Jesus Himself refers to the Holy Spirit as “my Mother” (“*Mater mou to Hagion Pneuma*”); a language also employed in the revelations of Christ to St. Catherine, according to which “the Holy Spirit is for man a Mother who nourishes him at the breast of My divine Love”.

‘maternal matrix’, the infinite fecundity of Essence, in which the Father gives birth to His Son (“*ex Patre Spirituque*” so to say).

This not wholly without precedent in the thoughts of the early Christians, for example Theophilus of Antioch speaks of the Trinity in terms of the Father and “His Logos and His Sophia” (cf. *P.G.* VI.1064C, 1077B, 1081B) and this identification of the second Person with the (masculine) Logos and the third Person with the (feminine) Sophia also in Irenaeus (*P.L.* VII.933A, 967B, 1038B) who says that God “made everything solid through the Logos, and He connects everything through Sophia”.

Mary, the Mother of God (as wells as the Church, *Mater Ecclesia*), is furthermore conceived of as a personification of this ‘divine Womanhood’ on the creaturely level, a kind of *avatâra* (“manifestation, not incarnation”) of the Spirit in His ‘maternal’ aspect – “*Filius incarnatus est: Jesus Christus; Spiritus Sanctus quasi-incarnatus est: Immaculata*” (St. Maximilian Kolbe).<sup>61</sup>

While the reading of both Evodikmov and Bulgakov relies heavily on an eastern understanding of the Trinity (with a ‘dyadic’ conception of Son and Spirit and the ‘monarchy of the Father’ necessitated by a rejection of the *filioque*), the Catholic Borella presents us with a slightly different reading of ‘hypostatic Maternity’.

Hypostatic Maternity is, for Borella, not to be taken literally; the Spirit does not ‘beget’ (nor is He ‘begotten’), He is rather the ‘interior matrix’ or ‘unitary space’ (*espace unitaire*) in which the Father begets.<sup>62</sup> As such

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<sup>61</sup> “She is, in personal form, the human likeness of the Holy Ghost. Through her, with her human form become entirely transparent to the Holy Ghost, we have a manifestation and, as it were, personal revelation of Him” (Bulgakov, *Sophia*, VI). This ‘transparency’ (“the Woman clothed with the Sun”) is also why she is the ‘Mediatrice of all Graces’ for it is said that all graces (the ‘gifts of the Spirit’) pass through her hands. A similar conception is to be found in Borella who sees her as a reflection of the ‘processive power’ (the ‘immanent fecundity’ or ‘trinitarian capacity’) of the thearchic Essence, such that the “*Natus ex Maria Virgine*” is but the temporal manifestation of the eternal “*Conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto*”; as already Meister Eckhart said (*Sermon* 8, Evans): “Our Lady, before becoming Mother of God in His humanity, was Mother of God in His divinity, and the birth she gave Him in His divinity is represented by the birth as man He took in her” (Borella also observed that in Lourdes Mary didn’t reveal herself as ‘immaculately conceived’ but as the ‘Immaculate Conception’ itself – “*Que soy era immaculada Councepoiou*”; a fact which certainly cannot be overlooked in this context).

<sup>62</sup> We might also link this unitary space of the Godhead, in which unfolds the Trinitarian love-play from eternity, to the image of the “burning bush” (and it is

He represents the Divine Essence in so far as it is ‘diffusive’ (for each Person is obviously not ‘different’ from the Essence as such but represents, similar to the Bulgakovian conception, a ‘hypostatized’ aspect of it)<sup>63</sup>, He is ‘procession as such’, not Conceiver nor Conceived (or the ‘Concept’) but the *Conception* (which is indeed ‘immaculate’ for it does not ‘determine’ or ‘divide’ in any way the perfect unity of Ousia).<sup>64</sup>

Thus the Immaculate Conception could be understood as the ‘interior matrix’ of the Divine Essence, the unfathomable depths of the Godhead, the shoreless Ocean of absolute Substance, the more-than-luminous Darkness of the superessential Thearchy, in which the Trinitarian relations are eternally deployed (*Amour et Vérite*, XVIII.1.2).

This does not, however, make Him the ‘second Person’ of the Trinity properly speaking, for His ‘hypostatization’ is actualized only ‘after’ the Son is engendered, the Spirit being the ‘hypostatic union’<sup>65</sup> of Father and

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no coincidence that the Church honours the Most Blessed Virgin under this name).

<sup>63</sup> As Borella expresses himself at another point: “The Godhead, being infinite, cannot be opposed to anything, and therefore includes both Relativity and Personality within itself, since no perfection is lacking to it ... Now it can be thought that, in the Person of the Father, the Trinitarian mystery expresses more particularly the ‘Godhead’ aspect; in the Person of the Son, the ‘relation’ aspect [for it is through the Word that God enters into relation with Himself, as well as with the creature], and in the Person of the Holy Spirit, the ‘hypostasis’ aspect” (cf. *Amour et Vérite*, XIV).

<sup>64</sup> This ‘Immaculate Conception’ (“the divine matrix in which God conceives Himself, the intra-divine space wherein the Essence of the Deity deploys Itself”) is also explicitly linked to the figure of Wisdom, the Biblical *Chockmah*, as the “metaphysical locus of the supreme alterity”, or “the possibility of multiplicity” in the One (Guénon’s ‘All-Possibility’), “the unlimited matrix wherein all creatures find their place to coexist without contradicting each other”: “Thus Eternal Wisdom is the divine dimension in which the metaphysical possibility of an other than God is realized ... *Sophia* designates the Infinitude of God, His incircumscribability, His supreme liberty which bestows on the innumerable multiplicity of creature their possibility to exist, to ‘be there’ (*d’être là*). She is this unique and universal ‘there’ (*là*) of all things, she is the play of being, and she gives existence to all the beings in this play. She is the space of infinite freedom where the play of the innumerable creation can unfold, and where all creature can play in one inter-related whole without destroying each other, the play of existence” (*Théologie Mystique*, XI.3).

<sup>65</sup> Borella clarifies that He is not “the One of the Trinity” (that being the Godhead itself) but the immanent unity or rather ‘non-duality’ (oneness

Son, their communal ‘kiss’ and the bond of their reciprocal Love (“*Caritas vinculum perfectionis*”).

‘Before’ the generation of the Son by the Father, there is only the Divine Essence and its immanent fecundity, which is simply one with it, and which is as if ‘hidden’ in it, at least from our point of view. But in the (eternal) moment when the Father begets the Son, He reveals, at the same time, the unity in which and thanks to which this generation can take place [as its ‘condition of possibility’ or ‘trinitarian capacity’] and which thus proceeds from them as ... hypostatic unity (of the Father and the Son) and this is how it is distinguished from the two it unifies ... Thus the immanent fecundity of the Divine Essence, the notion of which expresses nothing else than the mystery of a unity capable of its Trinitarian unfoldment, ‘becomes’ the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, in so far it is distinguished from the relation of begetting, [i.e the Hypostasis] of the unitary ground in which it unfolds itself. Without the relation of the generation of the Son, perfect Image of the Father, there is no Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, which is like mirror in which this image appears ... This immanent Conception of the Divine Essence this fecundity or ‘processive power’ would remain forever indistinguishable from the Essence itself if it were not hypostatized in the Holy Spirit by the begetting of the Son (*L’Esprit Saint, la Trinité et l’Immaculée Conception*).

The Spirit appears thus under a double aspect; as ‘processive *dynamis*’<sup>66</sup> (relative to the procession of the Word) and as the immanent unity (or ‘non-duality’) of the terms of procession (Father and Son) relative to their distinction, *exitus - reditus*, exhaling and inhaling, ‘living water’ and ‘Pentecostal fire’ (this ‘double aspect’ being also indicated by the double spiral of the initial *S* in ‘Spiritus’), both aspects finding their unitary expression in the single name of *Love* (which, as we have seen before, pertains especially to the Spirit); for Love is both ‘diffusive’ and ‘unifying’, it goes forth from itself and it gathers, and the two aspects of the Spirit are thus but two ‘operations’ of the same *energeia*.

The Spirit is He who ‘reveals’ Father and Son to each other *in divinis* (“*Spiritus est qui revelat mysteria*”, says already Baader) – “Just as

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pertaining primarily to the Father as unitary Principle). It could thus be said that in the Holy Spirit the One Essence ‘rediscovers’ its unity (after having begotten the eternal Son in it).

<sup>66</sup> According to St. Thomas (cf. *S.Th.* I.41), the ‘spirative power’ (*virtus spirativa*) does not belong solely to either the Father (like his ‘generative power’ does), nor the Son (like His ‘begottenness’), but to both, meaning that it ultimately pertains to the Divine Essence itself. The Spirit is thus Hypostasis which ‘reveals’ this spirative power, and in this way also the ‘processive power’ as such (which cannot yet stand revealed ‘before’ the generation of the Son).

speech is carried by the breath, and without it remains only a pure structure of articulation but not audible speech, so the *Pneuma* ‘carries’ the Word uttered by the Father and makes Him hear it” (*ibid.*).

#### IV. Towards a Synthesis

Now if Maternity *in divinis* as the ‘processive power’ (or “*shakti*” if you will) of the Essence (as well as the *Shekinah* as the ‘indwelling’ presence of God in creation)<sup>67</sup> finds its primal expression or ‘hypostatization’ in the Spirit, where does this leave our celestial Sophia?

One interpretation could be to follow the Kabbala in positing her as a kind of ‘first emanation’ (“the exhalation of the Almighty, a pure emanation of His glory”, Wis. 7:25).<sup>68</sup> We might even make us of the notion of *tzimtzum* (‘contraction’) as expounded in Lurianic Kabbala to make sense of as to how the transition from superessential Deity to the ‘birth of Sophia’ is effected.

The Essence of God being primarily kenotic Love (*Mysterium Trinitatis*), He cannot but want to ‘share’ this Love to an ‘other’ and thus, to make room for this ‘other’ (the nothing that is created being), He ‘sacrifices’ some of His Infinity in a primordial *kenosis*. As the Arizal explains:

Prior to Creation, there was only the infinite *Aur Ein Sof* filling all existence. When it arose in G-d’s Will to create worlds and emanate the emanated ... He contracted (*tzimtzum*) Himself in the point at the center, in the very center of His light. He restricted that light, distancing it to the sides surrounding the central point, so that there remained a void, a hollow empty space, away from the central point (*Etz Chaim*).

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<sup>67</sup> Christ as the Incarnate God, ‘Emmanuel’ and *tabernaculum Altissimi*, is of course also the *Shekinah* who “dwelt among us” (Joh. 1:14; “*eskenose*”, literally: “has pitched his tent”, having the same root as the word *Shekinah*). But we might also approach to the *Shekinah* to the Spirit as the ‘living water’ which ‘dwells in him’ according to Joh. 7:37-39.

<sup>68</sup> Attempts to transpose the tri-unity of the supernal sefirot on the Christian Trinity (as has been done by many a Christian Kabbalist since the earliest time) seem thus misguided. There is without a doubt a certain correspondence between the ‘triple Face’ of Adam Kadmon and the three Persons, however it seems more prudent to view the former as a manifestation or reflection of the latter rather than to identify them univocally. We might in passing also point to the *Sefer Yetzira* itself, in which we hear of the “Spirit” (or ‘Breath’) and the “Word” (which are not yet clearly distinguished in Jewish mysticism) as prior to any emanation, yea, that *by which* all procession is effected in the first place.

This ‘sacrifice’, which of course does not diminish His Infinity in any way, for “with Him there is neither increase nor decrease”, as the Ecclesiast says (Eccl. 18:6) – “Fullness taken from fullness / Fullness remains” (*Isha Upanishad*) – constitutes the ‘primordial Golgotha’, the eternal Sacrifice of the Lamb *in divinis* (“*Ecce Agnus Dei, qui occisus est ab origine mundi*”, Rev. 13:8): *Agnus Dei – Deus Agni*.

The creation of the world by God, the self-bifurcation of the Absolute, is the sacrifice of the Absolute for the sake of the relative, which becomes for it ‘other’ (*thateron*), a creative sacrifice of love. Golgotha was not only eternally pre-established at the creation of the world as an event in time, but it also constitutes the metaphysical essence of creation. The divine ‘it is accomplished’ proclaimed from the cross, embraces all being, refers to all creation. The voluntary sacrifice of selfless love, the Golgotha of the Absolute, is the foundation of creation, for ‘God *so* loved the world that he gave his Only-begotten Son’ (Bulgakov, *Unfading Light* II.1).

The world is founded on the Cross, and this quite literary, for it also designates the seven (6+1) directions of universal expansion by which manifestation unfolds (“the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of the love of Christ”, Eph. 3:18), the ‘seven pillars’ of the ‘House of Wisdom’ (“East, West, Height, Depth, North, South, and the Holy Palace in the midst, the foundation of all”, *Sefer Yetzira*, II.3).

This ‘Holy Palace’, the Centre in which He ‘contracted’ Himself according to Rabbi Luria, is nothing other than the Divine Heart, the Supernal Center par excellence from which all things radiate; such is the Divine *Misericordia*, the ‘pouring out’ of His Heart (*Cor Jesu Sacratissimum*).<sup>69</sup> And it is now, in this hour that there’s “darkness over the world” (Lk. 24:23), i.e. the ‘darkness’ over the earth that was “formless and void” (Gen. 1:2), that from the pierced Heart of God flow forth the ‘living waters’ (“*vidi aquam egredientem...*”), and this is the “fount of Wisdom” (Eccl. 1:5), the “river that flowed out of Eden to water the Garden” (Gen. 2:10), *Fons Vitae, Fons Sapientiae* (“Think of this One original Source as a spring, self-generating, feeding all of itself

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<sup>69</sup> These ‘radii’ emanating from the Divine Heart (*Centrum omnium cordium*) are connected to the centre (or ‘heart’) of each created being, wherein resides the ‘fortress’ (*bürgelîn, brahmapura*) of the Self. The connecting ‘ray’ linking Heart to heart is also the axis on which His *descensus* and our ascent is realized, the axis of ‘benediction’; and once the divine *pax profunda* (or *hesychia*) – the “peace that surpasses all understanding” and that the “world cannot give” (Phil. 4:7; Joh. 14:27) – enters into our heart, it truly becomes *Jeru-shalom*, the ‘City of Peace’.

to the rivers and not yet used up by it”, Plotinus IV.3)

I, Wisdom, have poured out rivers. I, like a brook out of a river of a mighty water; I, like a channel of a river, and like an aqueduct, came out of paradise. I said: I will water my garden of plants, and I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow; and behold my brook became a great river, and my river came near to a sea (Eccl. 24:40-43).

This ‘water’, the primordial substance, is nothing else than the ‘primordial Mary’, standing at the foot of the Cross (“*ecce Mater tua*”, Joh. 19:27), the pure receptivity of *prima materia*, the humble handmaiden of the Lord<sup>70</sup>, which – as an “unspotted mirror of God’s majesty” (Wis. 7:26) – offers Him His perfect reflection; she is the ‘water’ (*marijam/majim*, *maria/mare*) above which the Spirit of God hovers in contemplation (the Breath that ‘carries the Word’, i.e. the creative *Fiat*). ‘Mary’ appears thus as an *avatâra* of *prima materia*.<sup>71</sup>

She is Nature made woman, the human manifestation of Principal Nature, of *Prakriti*, which is none other than the content of creative Divine Thought, the ‘ideas’, in the Platonic sense, or archetypes of different beings projected into *Materia prima* ... She is Nature in its original purity, the Divine Feminine upon which the Glory of the Spirit shines, Primordial Nature, Holy Wisdom (Hani, *La vierge noir*, III).

This is ‘created’ or ‘emanated’ Wisdom (for, being the principle of manifestation, she stays herself unmanifested), and also the *kosmos noetos*<sup>72</sup>, for receiving (‘reflecting’) the *logoi* of the Logos (the

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<sup>70</sup> “‘Humble’, because it is fundamentally ‘that which is not’, destitute of all being, but ‘handmaiden’, that is, totally offered and submissive to the effluvia of the Spirit; and, precisely on account of this ‘poverty’ and ‘submission’, the Spirit accomplishes ‘great things’ in her, that is to say the whole of Creation, because this total poverty, this ‘emptiness’ apt to receive all forms and to be inexhaustibly impregnated with them while remaining ‘virgin’ and ‘immaculate’ – these ‘great things’, refer us to beauty as to the multiplicity of universal Creation” (Hani, *La vierge noir*, III).

<sup>71</sup> But, as we have said above, the ‘primordial substance’ represents at the same time but a ‘lower reflection’ of the ‘Universal Possibility’, or the *shakti* of the Principle (which we have now identified as the Spirit).

<sup>72</sup> Likewise Plotinus teaches that the *Nous* itself is already ‘material’ (which is the *hyle noete*, the ‘pneumatic substance’ underlying the *noeta*). Obviously the notion of *prima materia* (as ‘principal Nature’ or *natura naturans*) as developed here is infinitely more exalted than ‘matter’ as we usually understand it (i.e. the *hyle aesthete*).

‘uncreated Wisdom’, according to Patristic consensus) as an unstained Mirror, she becomes Wisdom herself; the *mundus archetypus* and universal matrix of manifestation (*Virgo Paritura*), who stands in the morning dawn of creation, reflecting the uncreated Light.

After this *tzimtzum* ... He drew down from the *Aur Ein Sof* a single straight line of light from His light surrounding from above to below, and it chained down descending into that void ... In the space of that void He emanated, created, formed and made all the worlds (*Etz Chaim*).

We might even say that the absolutely simple ray of the Logos is ‘reflected’ on the ‘sophianic waters’ as the human form, this being Sophia as ‘Celestial Man’ (*Adam Kadmon*), or the ‘primordial Idea’.

Sophia is thus primarily an image (or ‘icon’) of the Logos, His bride, sister and daughter who “plays before Him at all times” (Prov. 8), the created reflection of uncreated Wisdom, *logos ekthetos* and *logos enthetos*. But (the Logos being the ‘image of the Father’, the ‘hypostatic Image’ of the Godhead as such) she is likewise an image of the whole Trinity as such, the ‘mirror’ in which the three Persons eternally behold themselves and the tranquil sea which receives the light of the trihypostatic Sun, the ‘virgin earth’ in which the ‘seeds’ (*logoi*) of creation are sown and from which the whole ‘tree’ of universal manifestation springs forth: “You are a closed garden my sister, my bride; you are a spring shut up, a fountain sealed fountain” (Cant. 4:12).<sup>73</sup>

I came out of the mouth of the most High, the firstborn before all creatures:  
here should rise light that never faileth, and as a cloud<sup>74</sup> I covered all the

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<sup>73</sup> In many liturgical texts Mary is likewise praised as the (untilled) ‘earth’ which brought forth the ‘living Vine’, or the ‘Paradise’ in which the new ‘Tree of Life’ blooms forth: “*Vere hortus deliciarum, in quo consita sunt universa florum genera, et odoramenta virtutum, sicque conclusus, ut nesciat violari*” (St. Jerome).

<sup>74</sup> According to Ibn Arabi ‘universal Nature’ (*Tavi’at al-kull*), *mâyâ-prakriti*, *natura naturans* – which he likewise describes as a ‘cloud’ (*amâ*) – is the first ‘emanation’ of God prior to His creation. She is the ‘breath of the All-Merciful’ (*Nafas Ar-Rahman*) coming from the mouth of the Most High and the ‘substrate’ in which His creative words are articulated: “This Cloud, which the Divine Being exhaled and in which He originally was, *receives* all forms and at the same time *gives* beings their forms; it is active and passive, receptive and existentiating (*muḥaqqiq*); through it is effected the differentiation within the primordial reality of the being (*ḥaqîqat al-wujûd*) that is the Divine Being as such (*Ḥaqq fî dhâtihî*). As such, it is the absolute unconditioned Imagination (*khayâl mutlaq*)” (Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, III.1). The symbol of the



earth ... I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress tree on mount Sion. I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose plant in Jericho: As a fair olive tree in the plains, and as a plane tree by the water in the streets, was I exalted ... I have stretched out my branches as the turpentine tree, and my branches are of honour and grace. As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour: and my flowers are the fruit of honour and riches. I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits! (Eccl. 24).

May the Spirit of Wisdom be with you at all times, Amen.

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‘cloud’ is of course also abundantly used in the Old Testament to designate the theophanic manifestation of God’s Glory (*Shekinah*) on earth (cf. Ex. 16:10, 40:35, Num. 14:10, 16:18, 42 etc.). Let us also listen to what Blessed Anne tells us about the conception of Mary, or rather of the “celestial Mary”, “not the Blessed Virgin as she is in time, but as she is in eternity, in God”, her “preconception” in the Mind of God: “Our breath forms a little cloud in front of our mouth. That is how her figure was born in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity”.